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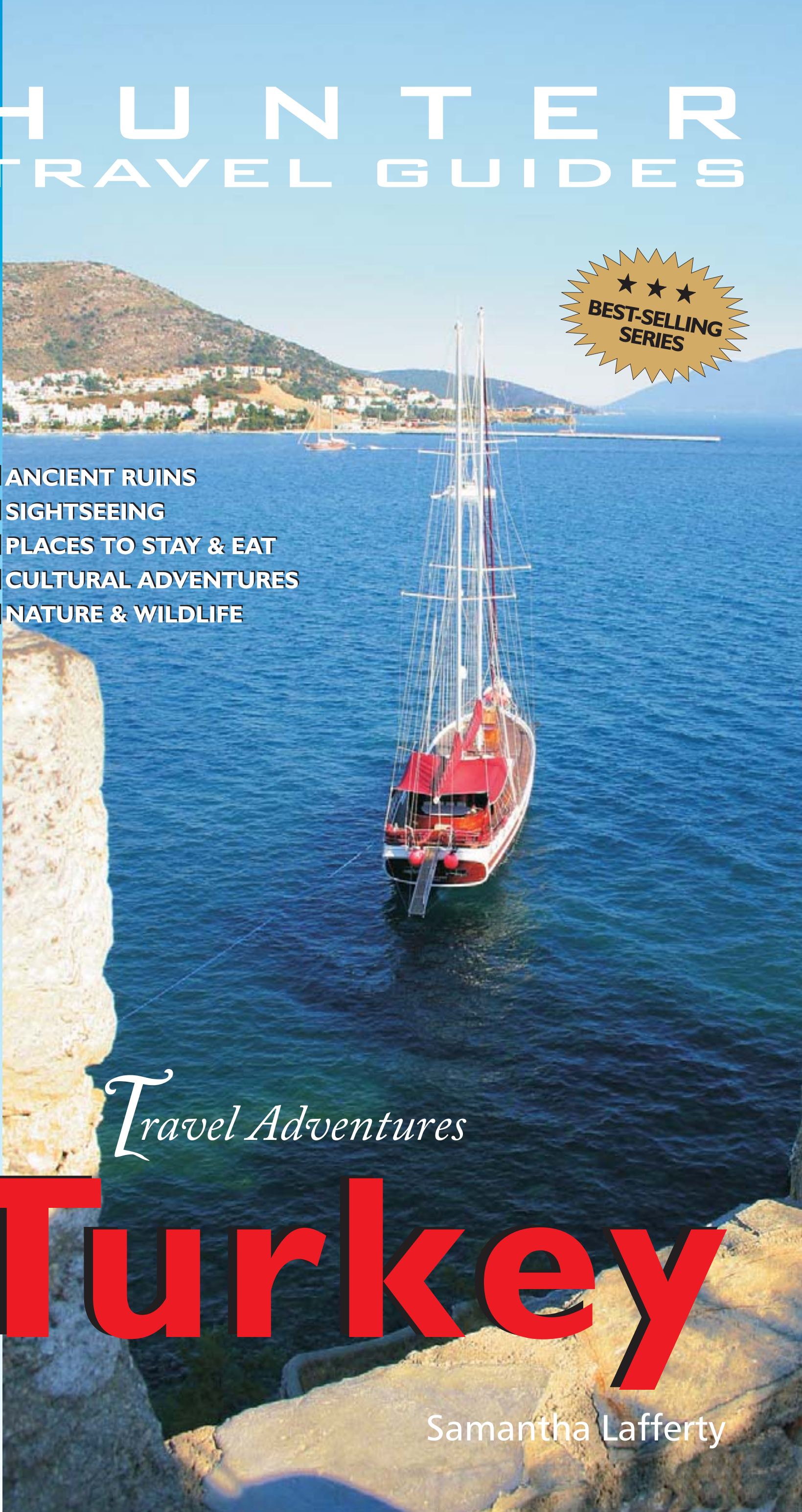

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Turkey

Samantha Lafferty

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Adventure Guide

Turkey

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

For Samantha Lafferty, Turkey is like a love affair. It evokes powerful emotions and a yearning to get back to it. Her fascination with the country was triggered by photographs she saw of the Blue Mosque and the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul as a child. And it took just one look at the city – the view across the Bosphorus from Topkapi Palace – for it to become cemented as her favorite.

Samantha Lafferty has spent eight years working as a journalist in London. Her writing has appeared in magazines and newspapers, including *Bloomberg, The Guardian, The Sunday Times* and the *International Herald Tribune.* So far, her wanderlust has taken her to the US and Canada, Australia, Fiji, Hong Kong and throughout Europe.

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Introduction

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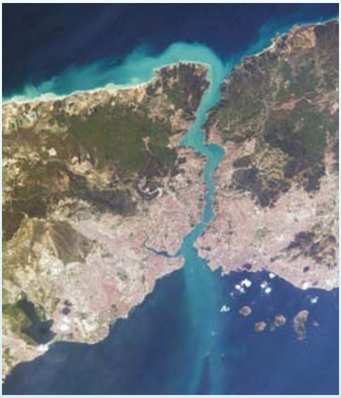
It is almost impossible to fit together the pieces of Turkey. It is an uneasy puzzle that refuses to lie side by side. In the west, mountains and pine forests frame a staggeringly beautiful coastline. The cosmopolitan capital of Ankara and the ethereal beauty of Cappadocia sit amid the harsh central steppes. In the east, there are biblical rivers, a fabled mountain and haunting cities and palaces. Then, there is the magnetism of Istanbul, a city with a constant beat and a stubbornness to be anything other than what it wants to be.

Turkey's location, straddling Asia and Europe, has left it with a battle-weary history and much political upheaval. The three great empires that ruled the country for thousands of years left a legacy of enchanting cultures and more ancient sites than even Italy or Greece can boast.



The Bosphorus River separates Europe and Asia, as shown in this NASA image.

The landscape is full of relics that beg to be discovered, whether independently or with a group, on foot or by bicycle. Hospitality is ingrained in Turkish culture and you will be greeted with warmth wherever your adventures take you.

Turkey is as old as history itself and yet it remains youthful. Its music, film and design industries are gaining prominence and its bid to become part of the European Union has placed it in the throes of an exciting revolution.

SAFE TRAVEL

The fact that Turkey is a Muslim country bordering Iran, Iraq and Syria causes concern among some travelers. Breathe easy. Turkey has a low crime rate and is incredibly safe to travel around. Indeed, few places are more welcoming to visitors.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Sunset on the Bosphorus.

HISTORY

THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

Anatolia has been a force in the development of civilization since biblical times. The Old Testament is littered with references to its mountains and rivers, and the people who lived there. **Edessa**, modern day Şanliurfa, was the home of Abraham, father of the Jewish nation. **Mount Ararat**, in the far east of the country, is said to have been the final resting place of Noah's Ark. Farther south lies ancient **Mesopotamia**. The great biblical rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, both run through the country.

The first evidence of settlement in Anatolia goes back even longer. The land has been continuously inhabited since the first steps of primitive mankind. Archaeologists excavating a cave in Yarimburgaz, south of Istanbul, unearthed human remains believed to be the oldest found to date outside Africa. They are estimated to be about one million years old. Separate studies of caves at Karain, Belbaşi and Beldibi near Antalya have unearthed well-preserved paintings and carvings on walls.

THE NEOLITHIC AGE

During the Neolithic Age, man moved away from hunting and foraging to harvesting crops. They became skilled farmers and often produced a surplus, freeing them to trade grain. By cultivating the land, people were able to remain in one place all year. They moved out of caves and into dwellings, which they constructed themselves.

Jericho is considered the oldest settlement in the world, originally dated at 9,500BC. However, recent excavations at **Nevali Cori** on the banks of the Euphrates, near Şanliurfa, suggest this date should be moved back. The research revealed clues that the Neolithic Age started between 12,000BC and 10,000BC.

The best-known Neolithic settlement lies on the yellow plains of Anatolia at **Çatalhoyuk**, south of Konya. Çatalhoyuk was settled in about 6800BC. Its farming community lived in mud brick and plaster dwellings tightly packed into a small area with no streets. Bizarrely, the houses did not have doors and the residents accessed the rooms through a hatch in the roof. The first irrigation system for crops was developed at Çatalhoyuk.

By 5000BC, a more sophisticated town had been built at Hacilar Hoyuk near Burdur, west of Çatalhoyuk. The town had streets and the houses had doors. Finds at both sites show Anatolian man had developed the ability to make utensils and figurines. Among the most striking artifacts are figurines believed to be shrines to the Mother Goddess. Good examples of these sculptures are exhibited at Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilizations.

THE BRONZE AGE

Man had discovered metal in the Stone Age, but he had not been able to use it in daily life because of problems refining it. It was not until the Bronze Age that he truly benefitted from finding copper, tin, silver and gold. The early Bronze Age was evident in Anatolia around 3000BC and 2000BC. The use of metals and, in particular the ability to blend metals together to create alloys, accelerated the advancement of Anatolian civilization.

Innovations changed the way people lived together and communicated with one another. The introduction of the plough aided agriculture, and ships increased communication and trade. A growing demand for raw materials and manufactured metal goods stimulated mining and trade routes were established to connect mines with refining centers, ports and markets.

Local princely families controlled trade and their wealth grew dramatically during this period. To safeguard their riches, they built well-ordered cities guarded by fortified walls. Their administrative and temple buildings were often built on a hill in the center of the city and were flanked by the thick walls of a citadel.

Ancient Troy.

Hoyuk in Turkish means “mound” and the most famous of these mounds was **Troy**. The first layers of Troy were built around 3000BC. It was a sophisticated community of large houses guarded by mighty walls. Archaeological digs at Troy unearthed hoards of treasure that bore testament to the affluence of the ruler King Priam.

Excavations of sites around Alacahoyuk and others near Ankara and Tokat in Central Anatolia, and Amasya and Samsun on the Black Sea Coast also revealed incredible artifacts, including gold crowns, jugs, sun discs, buckles, jewelry and ornaments. Many of these belonged to the **Hatti tribe**, the name given to the indigenous people of Anatolia.

ASSYRIAN TRADERS

Trade flourished during the 19th and 18th centuries BC. Assyrian traders, who wanted to acquire silver, gold, copper and precious stones, opened up a trade route that ran from Assur in Mesopotamia to the Central Anatolian plain. They procured the natural resources they desired by trading their own tin, perfume and fabrics. The Assyrians established trading colonies in several cities ruled by the Hattians, including the most famous at Kanesh/Nesha. They were advanced in their dealings and were the first people to introduce writing to Anatolia.

At the end of the 18th century BC, **Mitanni**, a powerful kingdom in the eastern Anatolian mountains, severed Assyrian trade with the central regions of Anatolia. This greatly weakened Assyria and it was later incorporated into Babylonia.

THE HITTITE CIVILIZATION

In the final days of the Assyrian colonial period, there was frequent strife in Central Anatolia between the Hatti tribe and the immigrant Indo-European **Hattites**, who were keen to consolidate their power. The city of Hattush on the Central Anatolian steppes was burned. A Hittite ruler, King Anitta, was not satisfied with destroying the city; he also inflicted a curse on it. The curse decreed that should any king occupy the land after Anitta he would be struck down by the Weather God. Anitta chose the city of Kanesh/Nesha as his capital.

The region to the east of Ankara was not populated during the Neolithic Age because of its high steppes and woodland. It was not until the discovery of minerals that settlement developed here. **Alacahoyuk** (shown below) soon became a thriving Hattian city, followed by nearby Hattush, which was located in one of the few areas of central Asia Minor where water was plentiful. Unlike the area today, which is barren scrubland with barely a tree in sight, the mountains were then covered with forests and the Kizil Irmak River provided a good source of water. By the mid-17th century BC, the resources in Hattush had attracted a Hittite king who made the city his capital, ignoring the curse of Anitta. Hattian Hattush had now become Hittite Hattusha.

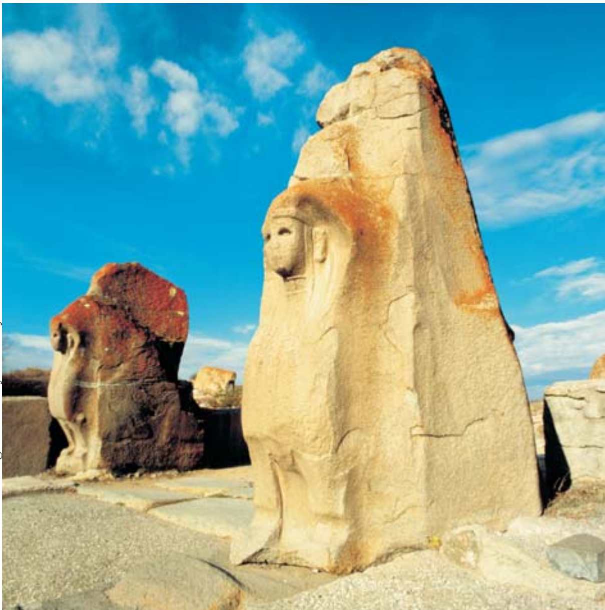


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

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Rampart, Hattusha.

ORIGINS IN THE CAUCASUS

Little is known about the origins of the Hittite civilization. Their language is Indo-European and it is believed that they moved into Central Anatolia in small groups through the Caucasus during the second half of the third millennium BC. The Hittites at first mingled with the Hatti tribes and later absorbed them into Hittite culture. They even retained the name of Hatti for their land.

The first Hittite king in Hattusha took the name **Hattushili I** or "one from Hattusha." He reintroduced cuneiform writing into the culture; it had been lost following the decline of the Assyrian traders. The clay tablets used for writing provide an incredible archive of legal codes, correspondence, cult ceremonies and ancient literature.

Hattushili I earned a formidable reputation through his battles in Central Anatolia, the Taurus Mountains and in northern Syria. At its peak, the Hittite empire stretched as far as Aleppo. Hattushili's successor, **Murshili**, pushed farther south towards Babylon before the warriors met a perilous resistance. Unrest led to the murder of Murshili. Soon, the Kingdom of **Mitanni** took control of Hittite land to the south of the Taurus Mountains and in southeast Anatolia. The following decades saw the Hittite kingdom shrink to the areas in Central Anatolia surrounding Hattusha.

It was not until **King Shupiluliuma I** came into power that the Hittites once again began to build an empire. They finally cracked the control of the Kingdom of Mitanni and their rule stretched down to Egypt. Strife between the two nations led to the Battle of Khadesh on the Orontes and the signing of the Treaty of Khadesh, the first ever peace treaty.

From 1250BC onward, the empire fell into a whirlwind of decline and revival with successive invasions, poor harvests and rows about royal

Hittite Goddess & Child sculpture.

succession. Over time, the population of Hattusha fled outside the city walls and, eventually, the capital fell into ruin. The great empire came to an end and with it came the close of the Bronze Age in Central Anatolia. The invasions had such a devastating effect on the Hittites that its history was only discovered in modern times.

THE URARTIAN STATE

After the fall of the Hittite Empire, at the beginning of the first millennium BC, a new state was formed that was to survive for 300 years. This was the **Kingdom of Urartu**, a populace whose origins were related both to the Hurrians and the Hittites. The Urartians were a typically Anatolian culture that adopted many of the customs and traditions of the Hittites. They were a tribe of powerful warriors, though during times of peace they were able farmers. They were skilled in horse-breeding, hydraulic works and, most importantly, irrigation, building canals and artificial waterways to their settlements.

During the early Urartu period, they were grouped into a series of mini-states known as Nairi. Around 900BC, they formed a confederation, first under the rule of **Aramu** and later under his successor, **Sarduri I**. During the reign of Sarduri, **Van** was the capital of the empire and it became larger and more prosperous. The early Urartian rulers added new towers and walls to existing fortresses, strengthening

© Wikimol

Ruins at the Old City of Van.

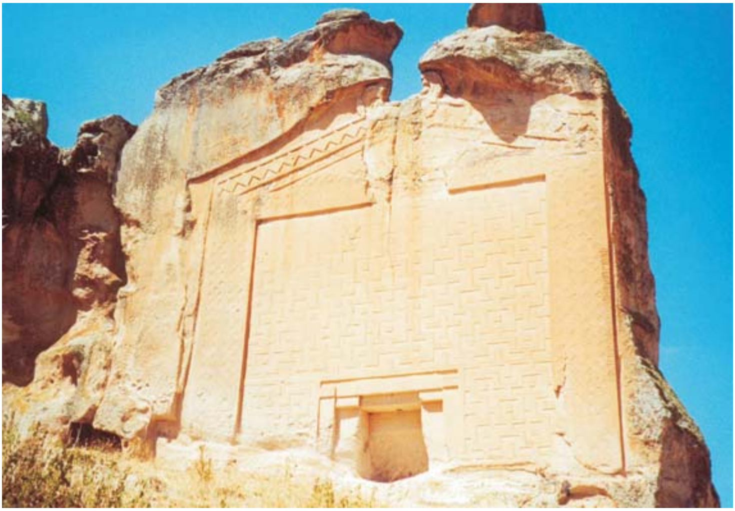
the kingdom as they extended it. They took the city of Mushashir, near Gevas on Lake Van, and challenged the Assyrians in the region. The confederation reached its zenith under **Sarduri II**, who ruled between 760BC and 730BC.

Constant raids by the Assyrians and Scythians weakened the state of Urartu after the death of Sarduri II and the Scythians finally annihilated the kingdom in 585BC.

THE PHRYGIANS & KING MIDAS

The Phrygians arrived in Anatolia in 1200BC. They settled in Central Anatolia, building cities over the remains of the Hittite capital at Hattusha and at nearby Alacahoyuk before making Phrygia, modern-day Gordion, their capital at the beginning of the eighth century BC.

The Phrygians' seat of power encased Central and Western Anatolia from Eskişehir to Ankara and Afyon. The Phrygians spoke an Indo-European language, with a Phoenician alphabet still seen on monuments at Midas City in Yazilikaya, south of Eskişehir.



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Tomb with inscriptions, Midas City.

The two powerful Phrygian kings live on in legend: Gordius, who gave his name to the city and the riddle of the Gordion knot, which was broken by Alexander, and his son, Midas who was reputed to have had a golden touch.

GORDIUS & MIDAS LEGENDS

Stories of King Midas were long thought to have been fantasies that made their way to Greece from Asia Minor. According to Greek mythology, Midas almost starved to death after being granted his power because he even turned his food to gold. He was cured by bathing in the Paktolos River.

Midas ascended to the throne in 738BC and immediately faced a threat. He is said to have committed suicide by drinking bull's blood after tribes from the northeast overthrew the kingdom.

His father, Gordius, was also the subject of an enduring tale. According to the legend, he made a complex knot around the pole and yoke of his chariot and pledged that whoever could untie the knot would become the ruler of Asia. About 500 years after the death of Gordius, Alexander the Great was battling the Persians. He passed through the capital of Phrygia, which had become known as Gordion. Alexander was unable to unravel the knot and so he sliced it in half with his sword.

THE LYDIANS

As the kingdoms of the Urartians and the Phrygians were ending, a new force was emerging in western Anatolia. The Lydians ruled from their capital at **Sardis** between 690BC and 546BC. They oversaw a large territory that stretched from the Black Sea through the Sea of Marmara and down to the Lycian Coast in the Mediterranean.

The Lydians were a Thracian warrior caste that dominated the indigenous peasants. They derived great wealth from alluvial gold found in the tributaries of the Hermus River and invented the first coins between 800BC and 650BC. Like Midas before him, stories of the untold riches of the Lydian King **Croesus** have lasted through the centuries.

Even his great fortune could not save Croesus from a destructive end. To save Lydia from a war, Croesus made a pact with the Persians to divide Anatolia. The Persians, however, had other ideas. In 546BC, Lydia was invaded and conquered by the Persian King Cyrus, who captured and imprisoned Croesus.

From their capital in modern day Iran, Cyrus and his successors expanded their empire west towards the Aegean. Sardis, once the Lydian capital, became one of the four seats of governors for the Persians, who by now ruled over most of Anatolia.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Turkey has nine historical sites that have been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites:

- Historic Areas of Istanbul (1985)
- Göreme National Park (1985)
- Great Mosque and Hospital of Divriği (1985)
- Hattuşas (1986)
- Nemrut Mountain (1987)
- Xanthos-Letoon (1988)
- Hierapolis-Pamukkale (1988)
- City of Safranbolu (1994)
- Archeological Site of Troy (1998)

THE HELLENISTIC CIVILIZATION

Before the defeat of the Lydians in 546BC, Greek refugees had fled across the Aegean Sea to Anatolia to escape the Dorians. They settled along the coast, which they named **Ionia**, and built great cities like Ephesus, Miletos and Priene during a time of Greek expansion. The Celcius Library at Ephesus is shown at right.

The true strength of the Hellenistic culture, as with that of the Romans, was the ability to

© Djenan Kozic

build great cities with streets and market places lined with columns and surrounded by defensive walls and gates. Inside were temples for the gods, baths and gymnasiums for health and hygiene, and stadiums and theaters for entertainment.

It was a golden age of architecture, with most buildings erected by slaves. Perhaps the greatest feat of engineering was in their water supplies, with aqueducts being built to transport water for miles. The Greek language was also a powerful force in combining the different groups within Anatolia. Everybody, from the prosperous classes to the peasants, used Greek in their daily lives.

Despite political unrest, these cities prospered from commerce with Phrygia and Lydia, grew in size, and generated a renaissance that put Ionia in the cultural vanguard of the Hellenic world.

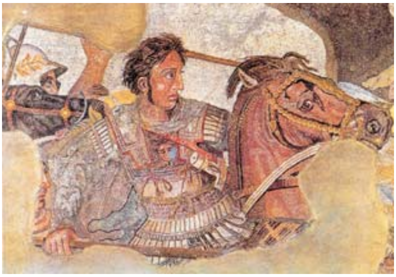
© Adam Carr

It was during the Classical Age (475BC to 334BC), that the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (shown here) and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, were built.

The Persians began to impose tyrannical rule on the Ionian cities. They were notorious for their destructiveness. After a revolt in 494BC, they wiped out Miletos, believed to have been the most splendid of the Ionian cities. The inhabitants of Xanthos, on the Lycian coast, opted instead for mass suicide. The Persians inhibited the growth and advancement of civilization in Anatolia until Alexander the Great landed there in 334 BC.

■ ALEXANDER THE GREAT

The boy king of Macedonia burned with a passion to liberate Anatolia from Persian rule. He had only 11 years from the time he first entered Anatolia to his death in 323BC, yet he amassed one of the world's greatest empires and probably the most short-lived. His influence lasted for centuries.



Mosaic of Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus (333BC)

Alexander's army marched across Anatolia spreading Hellenistic culture and language from the Ionian cities to the inland regions. He began his expedition from Macedonia by crossing Hellespont (the Dardanelles) and stopping at Troy and Gordion, before heading south to Phaselis in Lycia.

His intention was to conquer all Lycian and Pamphylian cities because of their strategic importance and natural materials. When leaving Phaselis he sent part of his army through the mountains to Perge and he himself followed a more difficult route along the sea. He expected a difficult reception but was greeted warmly by the city, mainly because it did not have strong enough defenses to withstand an onslaught. The gate towers that can be seen today were only built during the rule of the Syrian King Antiochos III (223BC to 187BC). Alexander left Anatolia through the Cilician Gates and went on to conquer the rest of the Persian Empire, including Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

Permagon
(Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

SCIENCE & SLAVES AT PERGAMON

After his victorious march across the entire known world, Alexander died in Babylon in 323BC following a prolonged drinking bout. After his death, control of Anatolia was contested by several of his Macedonian generals and the empire was carved up.

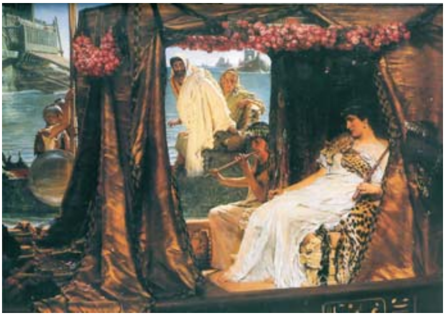
In 262BC, the ancient city of Pergamon became independent and reigned over much of Anatolia. The city, ruled by the Attalid dynasty, grew enormously wealthy through the trade of perfume and parchment. Slave labor worked on state-run farms. Pergamon was a center of learning and medical research, and scientific methods were used on the farms to bolster crops. The library at Pergamon was second only to that of Alexandria. Pergamon was considered the paragon of Hellenistic cities. It was also hated by other Greek cities because of its alliance with Rome.

THE ROMANS

The Roman period began in Anatolia with the death of **King Attalus III** of Pergamon, who bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans because he had no heir. Attalus had for decades contended with the growing power of the Romans who saw rich pickings of natural materials in Anatolia. The Romans also were concerned that Attalus had no natural successor and believed a power vacuum would destabilize important trading routes.

Attalus had been sympathetic to the Romans. However, local people were not and an uprising in Pergamon in 88BC led to the massacre of 80,000 Romans. The revolt was met with Roman force and they tightened their grip on the province.

Elsewhere, the Roman conquest of Hellenistic cities was gradual and, eventually, Hellenistic Anatolia became part of the Roman Empire. In 41BC, the most revered Roman general, **Mark Anthony**, arrived in Ephesus. Instead of being met with opposition, he was treated as an honored guest. Mark Anthony left Ephesus and headed south to the city of Tarsus where he summoned Cleopatra, the Hellenistic Queen of Egypt, to meet him. Mark Anthony was immediately captivated by the beautiful 27-year-old Cleopatra.



1885 Painting of Anthony & Cleopatra by artist Lawrence Alma-Tadema

THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

Less than 35 years after Anthony met Cleopatra, the ancient world changed irrevocably with the birth of Jesus Christ. From early on, the Christian church was part of Hellenistic-Roman culture. Early Christian texts, written by St. Paul, were written in Greek to Christian communities in the first century. Despite persecution, there were converts in Western and Central Anatolia in cities such as Tarsus and Ephesus. Finally, in 312 the Roman Emperor **Constantine** seized power. He became the sole ruler in 323.

BYZANTIUM

In 330 BC, Constantine moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium. At that time, Byzantium was a small town founded 1,000 years earlier by Byzas. The town's name was changed to Constantinople and it was rapidly transformed into a vast city. The name Byzantium did not disappear. Instead, it came to represent the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

In Rome itself, Christians were imprisoned and tortured, or thrown into the arena to be devoured by lions. But such persecution gave the Christians greater powers of resistance. Constantine was aware of this growing influence and in 313, he granted freedom of worship to all religions. Christianity later became the state religion. By the end of the fourth century, Constantine had established a patriarch in his capital city.

Western Christians claimed that the Pope in Rome was the leader of Christendom. Those in the East recognized the Patriarch of Constantinople as their leader. These two alliances led to the church being divided into the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

In 392, the Roman Empire was split in two by Emperor Theodoric the Great. The western half was ruled by Rome and the eastern section continued to be governed by Constantine. Rome collapsed towards the end of the fifth century, but the empire commanded by Constantine continued to flourish through the Dark Ages of Europe.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF BYZANTIUM

Justinian, who reigned from 527 to 565, brought the first golden era for Byzantium. He endured a shaky start when the two clans in Constanti-

Opposite: Interior of Aya Sophia (Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

ЄΝΩΧ
ЄΝΩϹ
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nople, the Blues and the Greens, suddenly united to protest against harsh treatment by the ruler. His life was in danger as they rounded on the Imperial Palace. However, the two groups reverted to their own battles and by the end of the day 30,000 of them lay dead in the Hippodrome.

© Zizibo

Justinian built the Church of the Holy Wisdom of God, Aya Sophia.

Justinian went on to rule for another 38 years, during which time he pushed the boundaries of the empire and built the Hagia Sophia, which at the time was the world's largest building. Another of his great triumphs was to assemble one thousand years of Roman rules into four volumes of laws, the basis for justice.

At the this time, the Byzantine Empire stretched from Italy, through Anatolia, Syria, Egypt and the Balkans, with outposts across North Africa. Anatolia was the most productive part of this empire and was also the principal source of its defense.

THE DECLINE OF BYZANTIUM

Following the reign of Justinian I, Byzantium was marred by religious dissent, problems with hunger and disease, and wars with the Persians that led to a contraction of the empire. In 628, **Emperor Heraclius** defeated three Persian generals and saved the empire from almost certain collapse. What he did not anticipate was the greater threat from the East of a new religion called Islam.

Muhammad was born in 570 and brought a religion that fueled a fervent loyalty long after his death in 632. He gave his followers confidence and they had extraordinary military success. In 635, they captured Jerusalem. They also pushed back and weakened the Byzantine Empire. The Arab armies crossed Anatolia three times attempting to take Constantinople. They failed, and Byzantium continued until the 11th century.

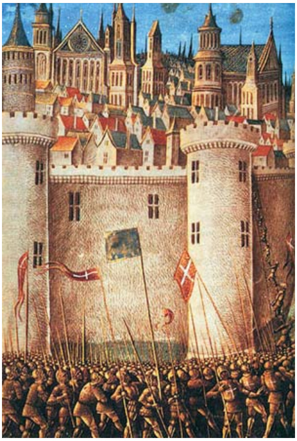
By the 13th century, Byzantium was in her death throes and faced another new enemy, the **Seljuk Turks**. Following the Battle of Manzikert in Eastern Anatolia, the Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantines, capturing much of Anatolia and, more importantly, Jerusalem.

THE CRUSADER MARCHES

The flagging Byzantine Empire endured political upheaval and civil war. During the chaos, a general named **Alexius Comnenus** seized the throne and imposed strict government control over the remains of the empire. In 1095, he called upon Pope Urban II to send Western mercenary troops to replenish the army. What Pope Urban sent was an elite army of wealthy Knights and professional soldiers intent on conquering Jerusalem. Known as the **Crusaders**, the band of Roman Catholic Christians led armed expeditions across Europe before heading to the Holy Land.

The First Crusade was the only successful campaign by the religious warriors. Two years later, the Turks defeated the Crusaders in a counterattack, or Jihad. Two subsequent crusades failed and it was not until 1204, that the Crusaders had further success.

Growing tension between the Catholic Western and Orthodox Eastern Christian churches was increasing. Added to this, the Venetians wanted to control the region's trade. The Crusaders turned their march on Constantinople and sacked the city, forcing the emperor to flee. The Crusaders established a Latin Kingdom that lasted until 1261. It was a short, but destructive, period in office, during which time many of the treasures of the Byzantines were stolen or destroyed.



Miniature 1490 painting of The First Crusade.

NEW THREATS FROM THE SELJUK TURKS

The Turks began entering Anatolia as nomadic tribes around the ninth century AD with their horses, tents and herds of goats. Their original home was in Central Asia, in a region north of Afghanistan and the Himalaya Mountains.

They left the bleak plains with their freezing winters and burning summers and found themselves in a land that had been the playing field for numerous kingdoms and empires for a couple of thousand years.

The early Turks had a reputation as fierce fighters and were employed as soldiers and bodyguards by the rulers of the Islamic world. In the 11th century, the Seljuk Turks founded a dynasty with the control of Iran, Iraq and Syria. When they defeated the Byzantines in the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, Anatolia's defenses were laid bare.

The Seljuk Sultanate had its peak in the first half of the 13th century. During that time, Anatolia underwent huge change in its religion, language, culture and politics. **Konya**, in Central Anatolia, was the seat of power for politics, economy, literature, culture and art. Anatolia was crossed east to west by the caravan routes on the Silk Road.

Thereafter, internal dissent and the invasion of the Mongols led to the collapse of the Seljuk Sultanate. Anatolia again descended into a fragmented land ruled by different groups, including the Ottomans.

HISTORICAL TOURS

If you want to bring the history of Turkey to life, try one of these companies, both of whom use historians to lead the tours.

Martin Randall Travel (☎ 0208-7423355, www.martinrandall.com), an award-winning travel company based in the UK, has four trips exploring Ottoman architecture, Central Anatolian civilizations, Greco-Roman ruins and the Byzantine-Ottoman capital of Istanbul.

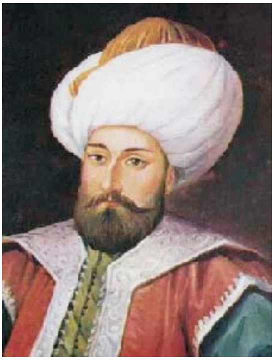
Ace Study Tours (☎ 01223-835055, www.acestudytours.co.uk), also in the UK, has an Ottoman art and architecture tour around Istanbul, Bursa, Çanakkale and Edirne, taking in the magnificent artifacts, mosques and palaces of the sultans.

THE RISE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman state rose from humble beginnings to become a world empire, which lasted from the late 13th century until 1923. The first Ottomans were nomadic chiefs, horsemen who won power on merit rather than through breeding. Incompetent chiefs were deposed and replaced by another who had proven himself in politics and warfare.

The first Ottoman State was founded at the beginning of the 14th century when **Osman** declared himself the leader of Soğut. Osman was a charismatic commander who attracted not only Turks to his army, but also impoverished Byzantine peasants and runaway slaves.

The Ottoman state gathered pace under Osman's son Orhan, who captured Iznik (Nicaea), Izmit (Nicomedia) and, in 1326, Bursa (Brusa), gaining control of much of northwest Anatolia. Orhan made Bursa his capital in 1355, advancing ever closer towards the city walls of Constantinople.


Murad I

Orhan's son, **Süleyman**, seized Thrace in 1355. He died two years later and the throne passed to Orhan's second son, **Murad I**, who brought Edirne and the Balkans into the empire. Murad I and his son, Bayezit, transformed the dynasty into a proficient military and administrative state. Power was centralized in the hands of a dominant sultan.

AN ELITE ARMY

Bayezit introduced an efficient system of collecting taxes from the subjects of the empire that restricted the traditional nomadic lifestyle of Turks. By 1365, they had established a regular army, known as the **Janissaries**, a well-trained and loyal force of soldiers who helped the Ottoman Empire to spread. Many of those chosen were boys taken from Christian villages in the Balkans and Greece. They were singled out for their intelligence and physical strength. Some were educated at palace schools to become viziers or high officers of the empire. Others were drafted into the elite army.

After a bloody battle against the Crusaders along the Danube River in Bulgaria, Bayezit turned his focus once again to the eastern borders of the empire where a ruthless new enemy was acquiring land. The conqueror, known as Timur in Anatolia and Tamerlane in Europe, advanced through Eastern Anatolia into the central plains before meeting Bayezit's army in Ankara in 1402. Tamerlane defeated the Ottomans and put Bayezit into prison, where he died. The loss slowed the expansion of the empire, but it did not quell it.

THE CONQUEROR OF CONSTANTINOPLE

By the mid-15th century under the rule of **Mehmet II**, the Ottomans plotted to overthrow Constantinople. Bayezit had come close to taking the city before being derailed by Tamerlane. Mehmet was more determined.

Rumeli Hisar
(Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

Constantinople had fallen into a dilapidated state under the Byzantines, though it was still considered a great prize because of its location. Mehmet took control of Constantinople with a huge battle and show of power. Much of the battle was won during the preparation. Mehmet built a special fleet and the Rumeli Hisar, a great fortress on the Bosphorus Strait, to stop supplies reaching the city from the Black Sea.

Against the odds, Constantinople held out for several months against the Ottoman war machine. The city's population had dwindled, but the remaining defenders fought bravely, aided by the strength of the city walls. On 29 May 1453, Mehmet was victorious and earned his name Mehmet the Conqueror. The last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI, died in the fighting.

REBUILDING CONSTANTINOPLE

Mehmet's triumph was the beginning of the Classical Age of the Ottoman Empire that lasted throughout the reign of Mehmet's successors Selim I and Süleyman I.

Imperial Gate, the main entrance to Topkapi Palace.

Mehmet was horrified by the ruinous state of Constantinople. He initiated a program of rebuilding the city and began with the construction of **Topkapi Palace**. Mosques, schools, hospitals, soup kitchens, fountains and baths followed. Many of the constructions were charitable and popularized the sultan. They also drew in more inhabitants to the new city of Constantinople and helped to turn it into the greatest of Islamic cities.

By the 16th century, the conquests of Selim I transformed the Ottoman Empire into a world power straddling the ancient routes between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. He was just over 40 years of age when he died in 1520.

OTTOMAN BOOKS

Ottoman artists were masters of calligraphy. They were regarded with great respect and paid the highest wages of the day. The books they illustrated were often hand-written Korans and other important Islamic manuscripts. The pages were embellished with the dust from sapphires, gold and other gems. Colorful miniature designs depicted life in the Ottoman court. The most valuable design is the sultan's *tugra*, or personal seal. The Sahaflar Çarsisi in Istanbul is the best place to hunt for these rare books.

SÜLEYMAN THE MAGNIFICENT

Europeans knew Süleyman as the Magnificent for the grandeur of his court. To his own subjects he was the Lawgiver. He was universally acclaimed as a great military strategist and a legislator. His empire was certainly magnificent in terms of power and size; it was also noted for grand charitable works. Under his 46-year rule, the empire reached the pinnacle of cultural and social esteem among world powers.

Selim I had extended the empire's economic and military reach, and placed it in a more secure position than it had ever been. Süleyman was still not content. He pushed the boundaries of the empire to their farthest reaches with campaigns in Europe and Asia.

Roads and caravansaries were built to bolster the trade route and an emphasis was placed on the development of science and the arts. Süleyman himself was a skilled poet and he kept an army of artists, religious thinkers and philosophers among his court. Süleyman was also a pioneer in setting up a system of social services to look after the poor.

THE GREAT SHRINES

The territories and character of the empire owed little to national, ethnic or religious boundaries. Instead, it was determined by the military and administrative power. The Ottomans attempted to bring as much territory as possible into the Islamic fold. The non-Muslims living in these areas were then absorbed into the empire as protected subjects. Under Selim I and Süleyman I, the Ottomans had acquired a large number of new Muslim subjects in southwestern Asia and northeastern Africa and controlled the great shrines of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, along with the most important pilgrimage routes.

Süleyman's reign was not without its problems. He faced a formidable enemy in the form of the **Habsburg family**. The Habsburgs were the ruling family of Austria, elected emperors of the Holy Roman Empire from 1438 to 1806. They were concerned with curbing the Ottoman advance into Europe and

Ottoman porcelain at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

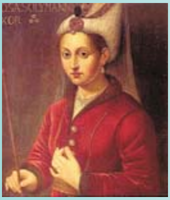
were successful in limiting the Ottoman territories to the fringes of Austria.

The end of Süleyman's reign marked the slow deterioration of the Ottoman Empire. It stopped expanding and tax collection became less efficient, putting pressure on the Ottoman purse. Fewer wars and irregular tax bills were not bad for the subjects of the empire.

THE HAREM

The excessive interference by women in the court of the sultans ultimately led to the decline of the empire. The meddling began during the rule of Süleyman the Magnificent. **Roxalena**, Süleyman's doe-eyed wife, moved with the other women to Topkapi Palace, the seat of power.

After Süleyman's death, the sultans did not go into battle with their armies, nor did they immerse themselves in world politics. Instead, they preferred to engross themselves with the concubines in the harem. **Murat III**, **Ahmed I** and **Ibrahim** were the greatest culprits. Under them, the number of women living in the harem rose, as did the cost of keeping them. Jewels and furs were popular presents. Not satisfied with their lavish lifestyle, the women plotted, bribed and lied their way to become the power behind the throne.



The image of the harem as full of sensuous women eager to entertain the lustful sultan comes from the harems of the 16th and 17th centuries. For later sultans, the harem was simply the part of the palace where his family lived. (Roxalena, Süleyman's wife, is shown here.)

The Valide Sultan, the sultan's mother, was the most powerful woman and often chose her son's wives and his favorites from the beautiful concubines. She would also scheme to remove those women of whom she did not approve.

WANING POWER

The Ottoman Empire was the longest-surviving empire in the world. It crumbled after elaborate building works like Dolmabahçe Palace and Beylerbeyi Palace pushed it into bankruptcy. In the end, it collapsed under the onslaught of Western influences that encouraged nationalism.

The Greek revolution of 1821 was only partially successful. It broke down after Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II asked Egypt for help. The Egyptians had almost defeated the Greeks when the British and French intervened. The armies faced each other at the **Battle of Navarino** and the Muslim fleet was forced to withdraw. Greece was finally declared independent in 1832.

Two decades later, the French and British had united with the Turks against the Russians in the Crimean War. Russia has been Turkey's greatest threat in modern history. Russia expanded its territories at a time when Ottoman power was waning. The Ottomans had suffered several defeats when, in 1853, Russia sent troops into the Ottoman Empire. In March 1854, the Ottomans declared war to prevent further Russian expansion. They were aided by Allied troops and within months had taken the Russian-held city of Sebastopol.

The Allied troops were victorious in their battle, but they had been poorly armed and had little medical assistance, despite the efforts of Florence Nightingale. They suffered massive casualties and many more soldiers died of disease. Far worse was the suffering of millions of Crimean Turks, who were killed or expelled from their homes. In 1876, the Ottoman Empire adopted its first written constitution and the most controversial sultan, **Abdul Hamid II**, came to the throne. A year later, a second Russo-Turk war proved catastrophic for the Turks. Much of northeastern Anatolia was lost. The Ottomans' biggest mistake was still to come.

Photo of Abdul Hamid II, circa 1890

THE YOUNG TURKS

A group of reformists, known as the Young Turks, believed that creating a democracy was essential for the survival of the empire. They resented European interference and wanted to revitalize the Ottoman government and economy. The army was seen as key to the revolution. Young students in the military medical school set up a cell, which eventually became known as the Committee of Union and Progress. The movement spread throughout other elite schools.

At the same time, the Ottoman Third Army, stationed in Macedonia, did not trust sultan Abdul Hamid and demanded restoration of the 1876 Ottoman constitution, which had been suspended. A revolution forced Hamid to declare elections. Candidates backed by the CUP (Committee of Union & Progress) won and began reforming the government by cutting thousands of jobs. Soon, many people in Constantinople were unhappy with the changes and saw the CUP candidates as middle class and removed from everyday life.

In 1909, a counter-revolution was declared and the CUP-backed cabinet was forced to resign. This was met with outrage by **Mahmud Sevket Paşa**, the general in charge of the Macedonian army. He sent troops to Constantinople and forced Sultan Abdul Hamid from power. His younger brother, **Mehmed V**, was placed in charge, but the real power lay with the Macedonian army and, ultimately, with three CUP ministers. **Mehmet Talat** was Minister of the Interior in 1915 and Grand Vizier or Prime Minister in 1917; **Ahmet Cemal** was Minister of the Marine; and **Ismail Enver** was Minister of War.

THE SEEDS OF WAR

From the beginning of the 20th century, European powers had been preparing themselves for war. They had spent vast amounts of money on new weapons and had formed alliances. The Turks, on the other hand, had no stomach for war. There was a scarcity of weapons because Sultan Abdul Hamid II had not replenished arms, fearing an army revolt. The new CUP government started to build armaments, but was still woefully unprepared. Similarly, infrastructure and communication in the country was poor. The only positive for the Turks was a rising nationalistic feeling and the bravery of its soldiers.

In 1912, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro all declared war on the Ottoman Empire. With the exception of an area north of Constantinople, the army was defenseless in halting the advance. Most of Ottoman Europe was lost. Soon, the Bulgarians began fighting its allies and a second Balkan War was raging. The Ottomans took back Thrace and the empire's border was drawn along modern-day lines.

The Ottomans initially stayed out of the First World War. The British had allied with its staunch enemy, Russia, though the Ottomans had little hostility towards the British. France still had an influence in the empire, especially in education and the arts. The Germans, on the other hand, had helped to rebuild the Ottoman army after the Balkan wars and were planning to build the great Berlin-to-Baghdad railway, which would unite much of the Ottoman Empire.

WORLD WAR I

By the start of the war, Germany had eclipsed Russia as the force most feared by the Europeans and Britain, in particular. It had built a formidable navy and had overtaken Britain as a world-class industrial and trading force. The Ottomans still feared Russia and knew of its desire to take control of Ottoman territories. In the end, the Ottomans had little choice but to side with Germany.

In 1914, **Enver Pasha** signed a secret treaty of alliance with Germany. General mobilization was ordered. Two German military ships, the *Goben* and the *Breslau*, were turned over to the Ottoman navy. They shelled Russian ports while flying the Ottoman flag. By November, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, followed the next day by Britain and France.

Enver launched an ill-prepared offensive in the winter of 1914-15 against the Russians in the Caucasus, hoping that a show of Ottoman strength there would incite an uprising among Russia's Turkish-speaking people. Instead, Russian military power proved devastating and the Ottoman forces were driven back.

THE ARMENIAN SIEGE

Meanwhile, Armenians living around the city of Van had been helping the Russians by mounting rebellions in the east. Their most successful attack was in the city of Van, which they took control of. This forced the Ottomans to bring forces back from the Russian border, but the Armenians held out. What followed was a bloody battle as ethnic Turks and Kurds descended on Armenian villages.

The Ottomans saw the Armenians as a threat to the empire and deported many of them through forced marches into Syria. Many were killed along the road, or died of starvation and disease. Others managed to escape behind Russian lines. There remains controversy about the events and the number of people who died.

The war was a human disaster for everybody in Anatolia. Muslims suffered by far the biggest number of casualties, a fact that is little known in the West.

ARMENIA

Turkey was among the first countries to recognize Armenia when it emerged from the wreckage of the Soviet Union in 1991. Talks between them have failed to resolve their disputes and in 1993, Turkey closed its land border with Armenia. The closest most tourists come to Armenia's archaeological sites is the disputed city of Ani and the crumbling bridge across the narrow river that separates the two countries.

© Samantha Lafferty

Graves along the Gallipoli Coast.

THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

In the spring of 1915, Allied troops undertook naval and land operations in the Dardanelles that were intended to knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war with one blow and to open the straits for the passage of supplies to Russia. It was badly planned and poorly executed. The Allied troops, made up of men from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and France, were defeated at sea by artillery and mines that kept the navy at bay.

The Allied land offensive was also a disaster. They landed at the wrong place after being carried by strong tides. Turkish troops fired from their positions on the cliffs at the advancing Allies on the beaches. After months of squalid conditions in makeshift trenches, the Allied troops were evacuated in January 1916.

In Eastern Anatolia, Russian armies won a series of battles that carried their control west to Erzincan by July 1916, though the Ottomans led a counteroffensive that checked the Russian advance. Russia left the war after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. The man in charge of the Gallipoli campaign and later, the Eastern front, was **Mustafa Kemal**.

THE FATHER OF THE TURKS

Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk

Mustafa, as he was first known, was born on March 12, 1881 in Salonika, modern-day Greece. His father, Ali Riza Efendi, was a Customs official. Mustafa was one of six children, though four of his five siblings died at young ages. His appearance set him apart from many other Turks. Like his mother, he was fair skinned and had deep blue eyes.

Mustafa's dislike of religious fundamentalism was instilled in him from a young age when he was sent to the local religious school. He disliked the ways of the teacher and openly challenged him. This forced his father to remove Mustafa from the school and send him to a secular school.

When his father died, Mustafa secretly sat the entrance exam for the Salonika Military Secondary School after being seduced by the elegant uniforms and panache of the soldiers. He persuaded his mother to allow him to attend the school, where he soon excelled at mathematics and earned the second name Kemal, meaning "perfection."

Mustafa Kemal quickly developed nationalist views while at military school. He trained at a time of constant conflict between Ottomans and Macedonian guerrillas and became aware that the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians were fighting to reclaim Ottoman land.

After graduating from military school in Salonika, he trained at the War College in Haribye, Constantinople. During his time in Constantinople, he began publishing a newspaper criticizing the Ottoman rulers. He graduated as a captain and was involved in minor political activities, including setting up a secret society, which resulted in a short stay in prison. Upon release, Mustafa Kemal was sent away to Damascus in Syria.

His secret society merged with the Young Turk movement, though Mustafa Kemal was in Enver's shadow when the Third Army in Macedonia forced the abdication of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1909. Mustafa Kemal later fought against the Italians in Libya before returning to Anatolia at the outbreak of the Balkan wars. When the country was dragged into the First World War, Mustafa Kemal was the only undefeated general of the Ottoman armies.

KEMAL'S PRIVATE LIFE

Atatürk married **Latife Hanim** in 1923. She was an intelligent woman with Western views. After their marriage, Atatürk traveled around the country with her. She did not wear the veil and lived with him, rather than in the separate harem quarters. Atatürk used his marriage to show others how his reforms could work. Unfortunately, it did not last. They were divorced in 1925.

COLLAPSE & DEVASTATION

Exhausted, the war government resigned, and the Young Turk triumvirate of Enver, Talat, and Cemal fled to exile in Germany. Talat and Cemal were held responsible for the deportation of Armenians and the mistreatment of refugees. Armenian nationalists assassinated them in 1921. Enver was killed while fighting the Bolsheviks in Central Asia.

The Ottoman Empire collapsed with the signing of an armistice on 27 October 1918. Constantinople appeased the Allies in their occupation in the hope it would be granted some rule. They placed their hope in a 14-point plan drawn up by US president Woodrow Wilson, which guaranteed self-determination of peoples. The Allies did not write their true intentions into the agreement.

The spirit of the armistice was broken with the Allied occupation in early 1919 of the Black Sea Coast and, later, Constantinople itself. The Armenians were given rule of Eastern Anatolia and the Greeks were allowed to invade Izmir. The British had already taken control of Egypt and Cyprus and added Iraq, Jordan and modern-day Israel. The French were given the northern Syrian provinces.

The basis of our modern wars, occupation of the Holy Land and Middle East oil, were in the sights of the British and their European allies. Russia was the loser in the carving up of Anatolia. It had been promised the prize asset of Constantinople and Eastern Anatolia. This offer was rescinded after the Bolshevik government took control. Instead, an Armenian Republic was formed in Eastern Anatolia and the British and French took the Straits around Constantinople.

At a peace conference in Paris, the powers opposed to the Ottomans agreed to the division of Ottoman territories under the harsh **Treaty of Sevres**. The Ottomans were rendered a spent force with no land to govern and dwindling finances. The Ottoman government signed the treaty in August 1920. The Allies had forced the disintegration of one of the world's great empires. However, they had not seen the beginnings of a valiant resistance movement.

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The Greek landings at Izmir, known then by its Greek name Smyrna, in 1919 had sparked the first struggles. Peasant villagers were mobilized into small groups and made guerilla raids on Greek troops and civilians. The movement grew into an organized group with the founding of the **Societies for the Defense of the Rights of Turks**. They were essentially still disparate groups and had little success.

The same month, Mustafa Kemal was sent to Samsun to disband the eastern armies and pacify the region. Instead, once he was away from Constantinople, he set about organizing a centrally controlled resistance movement. He traveled to cities, villages and makeshift camps to convince soldiers to unite behind the common aim.

The government in Constantinople revoked Kemal's authority. However, they were too late. He called two congresses, the first in Erzurum and the second in Sivas on the Black Sea Coast, calling for an independent Turkish state. Under Mustafa Kemal, the congress adopted a **National Pact**, which sought to safeguard the financial, political and judicial rights of the Turkish nation, along with the retention of Constantinople and the Straits. In November 1919, a new Nationalist government was elected in Constantinople and, two months later, they also adopted the National Pact.

The British in Constantinople reacted with force. They dissolved the government and interned about 150 officials and officers who were sympathetic to the Nationalists. Mustafa Kemal was condemned to death in absentia. Even though he was ensconced in Ankara, he took his death warrant as the catalyst for radical change.

THE TURKISH FLAG

The flag is a respected symbol for the Turks and strict laws are in place to protect it. You cannot burn the flag or even wear t-shirts with the flag printed on them. The red color on the flag symbolizes the blood spilled after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the star and crescent stand for independence.

THE GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

On April 23 1920, the first Grand National Assembly was founded in Ankara, with Mustafa Kemal as its president. Regions of the country not under Allied control were brought within its remit. A unified army was created with Mustafa Kemal's friend, **Ismet Paşa**, as the Chief of General Staff.

The first battle took place in the east with regular border skirmishes between the Turks and Armenians leading to further bloodshed. A treaty was agreed that drew the Armenian border at the same point it had been before 1878. Soon after, the Bolsheviks took the Armenian Republic.

Turks and Armenians, aided by French troops who controlled the cities, fought again in the southern region of Cilicia. The French were concerned that further attacks by the Turks would damage their control of Syria and they agreed to leave Cilicia. More importantly, they recognized the Turkish Nationalist government.

THE GREEK WAR

The Turkish War of Independence had begun in earnest when Greek ships landed at Smyrna. The Greeks had been awarded a small area around Smyrna for a period of five years. They tore up this agreement and spread troops throughout the region. Greek forces attacked Turkish soldiers and civilians. Pockets of resistance could not hold out without assistance from the Ottoman government. They were not given any aid.

The British Prime Minister David Lloyd George had a special relationship with his Greek counterpart and a dislike of non-Christians. The British, who were in control of areas south of Constantinople, handed these territories to Greece.

During this time, Mustafa Kemal was still mobilizing and training his army. An unlikely ally was found with the signing of a friendship agreement with the Soviets. This provided money and arms for the Turks. They began the Battle of Sakarya to defend Ankara. This was followed by a two-year fight against the Greeks led by Mustafa Kemal himself. In September 1922, Smyrna was liberated. A devastating fire marked the end of the Greek occupation.

EARLY TURKISH REPUBLIC, 1923-1945

After the victory in the War of Independence, the **Treaty of Lausanne** was signed on 24 July 1923, giving Turks independence and sovereignty. On 29 October of that year, the Grand National Assembly declared the beginning of the Republic of Turkey with Mustafa Kemal as its president. He was the leader of the newly formed **Republican People's Party**. It was also at this time that Constantinople became known as Istanbul.

The new nation now faced enormous problems with thousands of refugees, the destruction of cities, an economy crippled by war and the breakdown of political institutions. Greece and Turkey resolved to have an exchange of their populations after it was determined that they could not live together.

Atatürk was committed to legality and reform, though his strong stance was sometimes viewed as autocratic. In 1924, some of the leading military officials resigned to form their own political party, called the **Progressive Republicans**. The following year, a Kurdish revolt inspired by a Dervish leader prompted Atatürk to ban the Progressive Republicans and the Dervish order. A plot was uncovered to assassinate Atatürk in 1930. Members of the Progressive Republicans were accused of involvement and hanged.

THE REFORMS

Mustafa Kemal undertook a range of sweeping reforms that transformed the country into a modern, Western-influenced secular state.

He separated religious and state affairs. Secular courts replaced Shariah courts and the religious school system was abolished. The role of the state in managing the economy is written into the constitution.

European dress, calendar and time systems were adopted. The traditional red fez was outlawed, as were veils for women. The Arabic alphabet was replaced with the Turkish alphabet and Latin script.

Changes were made to marriage and women's rights. Polygamy became illegal and by 1930 women had been granted the right to vote and hold office in municipalities.

Turkey joined the League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations, in 1932. Two years later, all citizens had to adopt a surname. Many rushed to adopt patriotic names. Mustafa Kemal was given the name Atatürk, meaning "Father of the Turks."

ATATÜRK'S DEATH

Atatürk died of cirrhosis of the liver at Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul on November 10 1938. His death provoked an enormous outpouring of grief across the country he did so much to liberate and rebuild. His body lay in state for three days while hundreds of thousands of people from Istanbul filed silently past.

Atatürk's funeral cortege was magnificent and his faithful countrymen stood on the streets, perched in trees and clambered on to buildings to catch a glimpse. His coffin was placed on a gun carriage and drawn through Istanbul by soldiers. It was taken by ship down the Bosphorus and through the Sea of Marmara to Izmit, where it was then transported on the white presidential train to Ankara. Thousands of peasants stood by the rail tracks with burning torches, marking the way for their hero's final journey.

Atatürk's funeral procession, 1938.

Atatürk is still revered by his people, and many Turks bemoan the country's need for a strong, charismatic leader like him. His style and good looks are captured on the pictures hung in every office, school and home. Cities and villages throughout the country have memorials to Atatürk, from imposing statues of him on horseback to small bronze busts. People still proudly recite his mantra: How happy is the one who can call himself a Turk.

A NEW ERA

After Atatürk's death, his lifelong friend, **Ismail Inönü**, was sworn in as the Republic's second president. His immediate attention was taken by the blackening clouds of another war in Europe. Turkey remained neutral throughout the Second World War. That did not stop it condemning the Nazi state towards the end of the war, just in time to qualify for United Nations membership.

Meanwhile, there was fresh hostility between Russia and Turkey. The Russians staked a claim to former Armenian lands in Eastern Turkey. They withdrew their demands after Britain and the US backed the Ankara government.

The US remained influential in Turkey. Their friendship led to Turkey becoming embroiled in the Korean War in 1950 and being admitted to NATO in 1952.

MILITARY RULE

In 1945, a group of former Progressive Republican party members had formed a new political party called the **Democratic Party**. Adnan Menderes, a politician and cotton grower, and Celal Bayar, a banker, were the protagonists. They were swept to power in 1950 on promises to relax state controls over business and agriculture. Menderes was prime minister and Bayar became president.

Their policies encouraged US economic and military aid, giving a distinctly American flavor to the country's reforms. In return, Turkey granted the US airbases and surveillance stations. In practice, the government's policies were erratic and the country headed towards economic chaos with a massive trade deficit and national debt. As the situation degenerated, Menderes imposed strict curbs on the press and jailed political opponents. He was finally thrown out in a popular military coup. A year later, he was sentenced to death.

The conservative **Justice Party** entered power in 1965 with a commitment to a free market economy and foreign investment. The late 1960s saw an explosion in socialist action, with strikes and violence bringing further military intervention. Throughout the 1970s, the country was plunged into further upheaval with rising public spending and spiraling debt. Left-wing uprisings and sectarian clashes pushed the country close to civil war in 1980. This time, the military ruled with an iron fist. Political parties were banned and their leaders imprisoned, alongside thousands of suspected terrorists.

ABOUT CYPRUS

While Turkey faced problems at home, it encountered growing unrest on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. Turks and Greeks had squabbled over the island since Ottomans times. Relations deteriorated after 1960 when the British granted independence to Cyprus and a power-sharing government was established.

The situation imploded in 1974 when the military junta in Greece deposed Cypriot President Makarios and planned to annex the island. Greek forces attacked Turkish villages, killing thousands of men, women and children. Pleas from Ankara for British aid were ignored, even though this flouted the Treaty of Guarantee designed to ensure Cypriot independence. Ankara responded by sending Turkish troops into the north of the island. The move was called "an invasion" by the world. Ankara insists it had no choice.

The UN partitioned the island in July 1974, with the northern third under Turkish-Cypriot control and the remainder run by Greek Cypriots. A Green Line runs through the island and divides the capital, Nicosia. Makarios returned to Cyprus as president in December 1974. The Turkish north declared itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983 and retains 30,000 troops there.

Travel restrictions were eased in 2003 and in the months that followed, Greek Cypriots poured across the border to visit villages they had not seen for 30 years. Turks who ventured into Greek territory were greeted by boards showing pictures of Greeks they claim disappeared during the fighting. In the center of Nicosia's shopping district, there is a viewing platform where tourists and Greek Cypriots can see across the wasteland of no-man's land. It gives a shocking, and utterly inaccurate, view of life in the Turkish-Cypriot north.

After lengthy talks, a peace plan was put to both communities in twin referendums in 2004. Turkish Cypriots voted in favor of the plan, but Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected it, and so the island remains divided. Turkey's quest for European Union membership has focused minds on reaching a resolution for the future of the island. So far, there has been much talking, but no sight of reunification.

GOVERNMENT RESTORED BY ÖZAL

Three years after the military coup in Turkey, new elections were called with strict regulations imposed. The political parties and the candidates could not have links to the disbanded parties. The military screened the parties and dwindled the numbers down to three. The first candidate was retired general **Turgut Sunalp**, leader of the **National Democracy Party**. The second contender was **Turgut Özal** and the **Motherland Party**. The **Populist Party's Necdet Calp** was also contesting the election. The military expected Sunalp to be the victor. Instead, Özal won overwhelming support and restored the civilian government. He was to lead the country for a decade.

The military was still in charge at local level and influential in politics at the center. Özal set about easing military-imposed restrictions to improve Turkey's international image. Özal was credited with relaxing trade laws and encouraging world trade. He spent fortunes developing the tourism sector, attracting foreign investment and creating business opportunities, albeit with little regard for rising inflation.

Özal's government was besieged by inconsistencies. It switched between repealing military control and at the same time was accused by Amnesty International of orchestrating torture in Turkish prisons, press censorship and the denial of human rights. The government denied such reports, but they continued to be obstacles for relations with Europe.

TURKEY AFTER ÖZAL

Özal died from a heart attack in 1993 and in the years that followed Turkey struggled to reconcile his reforms with the traditions of the Turkish Republic and with a modern democracy. A strong, stable government still seemed elusive.

Süleyman Demirel, Özal's successor as president of the country, began his seven-year term. Tansu Çiller, an American-educated former economics professor, became Turkey's first female prime minister. Her appointment was designed to promote Turkey as a Westernized, modern society. However, financial instability and political compromises with the pro-Islamic Refah Welfare Party tarnished her image. Her tenure was also beset with escalating violence from Kurdish separatists.

ABOUT THE KURDS

It is estimated that there are about 25 million Kurds mainly spread across four borders: Turkey has about 12 million; Iran has six million; Iraq has 3.5 million; and Syria about one million. The remainder are scattered across other countries. The Kurds are the largest population without their own state.

Where the Kurds came from is unclear. Some Kurds consider themselves to be descendants of **Noah**. Others say they are ancestors of the ancient **Medes**, who, because of military conquests, defeats and the collapse of empires, began to migrate around 2,000 years ago to the mountains where they live today.

Kurdish men typically have darker skin, thick black hair and moustaches, and guttural accents. They also tend to be less conservative than their Turkish counterparts. The traditional homeland of Kurds in Turkey is in the southeast, with the city of Diyarbakir serving as an unofficial capital. Many Kurds are farmers who move their sheep, goats and cattle from mountain pastures in summer to lowlands in winter. Poverty and constant fighting in the southeast has driven many young Kurds towards Istanbul and other Western cities in search of better opportunities.

The troubles began with the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Under the Treaty of Sevres, signed in 1920, the Ottomans agreed that a commission would give Kurds local autonomy in areas where they dominated the population. When the new leader, Mustafa Kemal, took control of the country, he wanted to create an imperishable Turkish nation and began to assimilate Kurds into that society. He not only denied the Kurds autonomy, he denied their existence. Kurdish schools were closed and Kurdish language, education, dress and names were prohibited.

OCALAN'S PKK

In 1974, the same year Turkey was defending its people in Cyprus, a Kurd named **Abdullah Ocalan** gathered a group of friends in Ankara to form a liberal resistance group. He laid the foundations for the **Partia Karkaran-e Kurdistan**, known as the PKK. The group became active in 1984, demanding a Kurdish state and political and economic rights. Ocalan's army consisted of hundreds of militants who launched attacks on army posts along Turkey's borders.

The government tried to root out PKK members by paying Kurdish guards within villages. If the villages refused to cooperate, people would be forcibly evacuated and their homes burned. On the other hand, aiding the Turkish government would lead to reprisals from the PKK. Kurdish peasants were trapped between both sides of the conflict.

The Captured Leader

After years of bloodshed, hope of peace came first with Özal, whom Kurds trusted to negotiate a solution. When he died, the task of creating peace was passed to Çiller. Ocalan pledged a ceasefire and in return, Çiller promised a $220 million development package, including new roads and help for farmers and carpet weavers. The package was soon suspended over accusations that the PKK was extorting the money paid out to Kurds. The PKK turned up its terrorist activities in the 1990s by targeting tourists in Western resorts. At the beginning of 1999, Ocalan was captured and sentenced to death. The European Court of Human Rights ruled he did not have a fair trial and the death sentence was lifted. From his prison cell, Ocalan has called for the PKK to withdraw to Kurdish-controlled Northern Iraq. Since the conflict began, 37,000 people have been killed.

THE IZMIT EARTHQUAKE

More blood was spilled on Turkish soil when the devastating Izmit earthquake hit in 1999. It was the country's most powerful earthquake, measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale, and left 17,000 people dead. The earthquake struck in the middle of the night and most of those killed had been sleeping. Few of Izmit's buildings were designed to withstand an earthquake and entire districts were leveled. Buildings were also destroyed in Istanbul, 80 km/50 miles away. Three months later, a second earthquake caused more carnage.

A year after the earthquake, Demirel's attempt to change the constitution and retain his presidency failed. Turkey's senior judge, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a man who was known for his commitment to fighting corruption and free government, replaced him. Sezer became the first president in modern Turkish history who was neither an active politician nor a military commander.

Unfortunately, Sezer's watch was dogged by economic turmoil and he had to run to the International Monetary Fund for assistance. This helped to control inflation rates until September 11 rocked the economy again, as tourists stayed away.

RENEWED TENSION

The PKK called off its ceasefire in 2004 and after a period of calm, tensions rose again in 2006. There have been sporadic acts of violence in the country. However, most of the clashes have been concentrated along Turkey's border with Iraq and visitors should feel perfectly safe traveling around the country. The majority of Turks and Kurds are extremely welcoming to visitors, who are generally unaware of any tensions between them.

GOVERNMENT

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Turkey is a secular democratic state. The government is a parliamentary republic based on the constitution drawn up in 1982. The parliament has 550 members who are directly elected for five-year terms. Men and women can vote from the age of 18.

THE AKP PARTY

In 2002, the AKP, Justice and Development Party, won a landslide election victory even though its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was not permitted to hold a seat. He had been barred from standing in the election because of a previous criminal conviction for reading an Islamist poem at a political rally, an action deemed to be religious hatred, for which he served several months in jail.

In Turkey, the prime minister must also be a member of parliament. AKP deputy leader Abdullah Gül became prime minister immediately following the elections. Erdoğan held a prominent position. The constitution was changed to allow Erdoğan to stand in a by-election.

He became a member of parliament in 2003 and Gül stepped down, allowing Erdoğan to become Prime Minister.

The AKP has Islamic roots, though Erdoğan insists he is committed to the secular state. Many Westernized Turks doubt his beliefs. Some of Erdoğan's reforms have certainly brought religion back to the fore. Among the more contentious is his move to lift the ban on headscarves in schools and state offices. So far, opposition from the military and legal establishment has deferred change and Erdoğan's attempts to raise the profile of Islam in public life have remained exactly that.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Erdoğan is immensely popular and it is the strength of his majority that concerns some in the country. The center-right AKP had formed the first single-party government for 15 years. In 2007, with Turkey facing a very Western problem – a lack of good political opposition – the AKP party won another large majority in the general election. Later the same year, Gül succeeded Sezer as the country's first President with an Islamic background.

TURKEY & THE EUROPEAN UNION

Erdoğan had originally swept to power on a ticket pledging EU membership. Since then, his party has rewritten most of the rulebook for Turkish politics in the hope of becoming the EU's only Muslim member. The biggest reforms have been in human rights. Turkey abolished the death penalty and reformed the penal code after it became an EU candidate in 1999.

But with skepticism growing among EU members such as France and Austria about the validity of Turkey's bid, critics argue that too many obstacles are being placed in the way. The EU will demand concrete proof that Turkey has wiped out human rights problems, improved the plight of women and guaranteed freedom of expression before negotiations begin in earnest.

Turkey was officially given the green light to begin formal membership negotiations in October 2005. It could be a decade before the country is admitted.

ECONOMIC REVIVAL

Turkey has achieved a spectacular turnaround since an economic crisis, stretching over three decades, took the country to the edge of collapse in 2001. Efforts to privatize some industries and make the economy more open to foreign investment were derailed in 2001 when inflation soared to 68.5% and the country flirted with a debt default.

In 2002, Turkey accepted an $18.6 billion loan package from the IMF. Three years later, it took on a further $10 billion three-year package to fund restructuring.

Since then, sweeping economic reforms and the possibility of EU membership made Turkey the star performer in the recent emerging-markets boom. Buoyed by an equally stable government and fiscal policy, the Istanbul Stock Exchange jumped 400% between October 2002 and February 2006.

Textile and **car manufacturing**, **agriculture** and **energy** are among the country's most robust industries. Turkey is one of the world's few self-sufficient food producers and ranks among the top 10 food exporters. It is also the sixth-largest cotton producer, providing cheap raw material for its textile industry.

The **tourism industry** is also grabbing its share of the spotlight with record numbers of visitors in 2004 and 2005. Even the telecoms and construction industries are coming back from the doldrums.

Oludeniz is one of the country's many beautiful beaches.

Economic growth was strong in 2006, though the country dished up some surprises. The lira tumbled, inflation unexpectedly rose and the $25 billion current-account deficit showed no signs of abating. The Turkish Central Bank raised its key interest rate to 17.25% to halt the decline in the lira.

Future reforms will have to address the enormous inequalities in people's personal incomes, the booming black economy and the red tape that dogs all aspects of life in Turkey.

WHO KNEW? Turkey is the world's leading producer of hazelnuts, apricots and figs and the fourth-largest producer of vegetables, grapes and tobacco. About 30% of the country's population is employed in the agriculture industry.

THE LAND

© Jillian Pond/iStockPhoto

Turkey covers an area of 814,578 square km/314,500 square miles and would fit the states of Texas and Florida into its borders. The country has eight neighbors. To the north and east are Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran. To the south lie Iraq and Syria. Turkey's European neighbors are Greece and Bulgaria.

Turkey is the only country split into two continents. The triangular Thrace region sits in Europe and the vast Anatolian region in Asia.

More than one-third of the land is arable and almost a third is forest. About 15% of Turkey's land is made up of meadows and pastures.

GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

The country has seven geographic regions: Marmara, the Black Sea, the Aegean, the Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia.

© Doron

Seven Lakes, Tauraus Mountains

MARMARA: Marmara covers the area surrounding the Sea of Marmara and includes **Istanbul** and **Thrace**. It is the country's most populated and developed region.

BLACK SEA: The Black Sea region runs along the northern border of the country stretching from west to east.

THE AEGEAN: The Aegean includes the area along the western coast, from the Aegean Sea down to the Mediterranean. Away from the coast, fields are brimming with olives, fruit and vegetables.

THE MEDITERRANEAN: This southwestern region has a rugged coast framed by the central and western **Taurus Mountains**. Tomatoes and cotton are grown here.

CENTRAL ANATOLIA: Central Anatolia is a vast steppe in the middle of the country encompassing the volcanic **Mount Erciyes**.

Mount Ararat

EASTERN ANATOLIA: This is Turkey's largest and most mountainous region with an average altitude of 2,000 m/6,500 feet. The fabled **Mount Ararat**, where Noah's Ark is said to have landed, stands at 5,165 m/ 17,000 feet. The region has harsh terrain with austere winters and little development.

SOUTHEAST ANATOLIA: The smallest and hottest region is Southeast Anatolia with its semi-desert lowlands.

RIVERS & LAKES

Turkey is crossed by many rivers with the mightiest, the **Euphrates** and **Tigris**, flowing through the southeast into Syria and Iraq. The longest rivers, the **Yeşilirmak**, **Kizilirmak** and the **Sakarya**, flow from the Black Sea.

© JoJan

The salty shores of Lake Tuz.

Lake Van in Eastern Anatolia is the largest lake, spanning 3,713 square km/1,430 square miles. **Lake Tuz** in Central Anatolia is the second largest, while **Lake Uzungöl** is the most beautiful. Southwest Anatolia is known as Turkey's "Lake District," with at least seven lakes scattered throughout the mountains.

FLORA

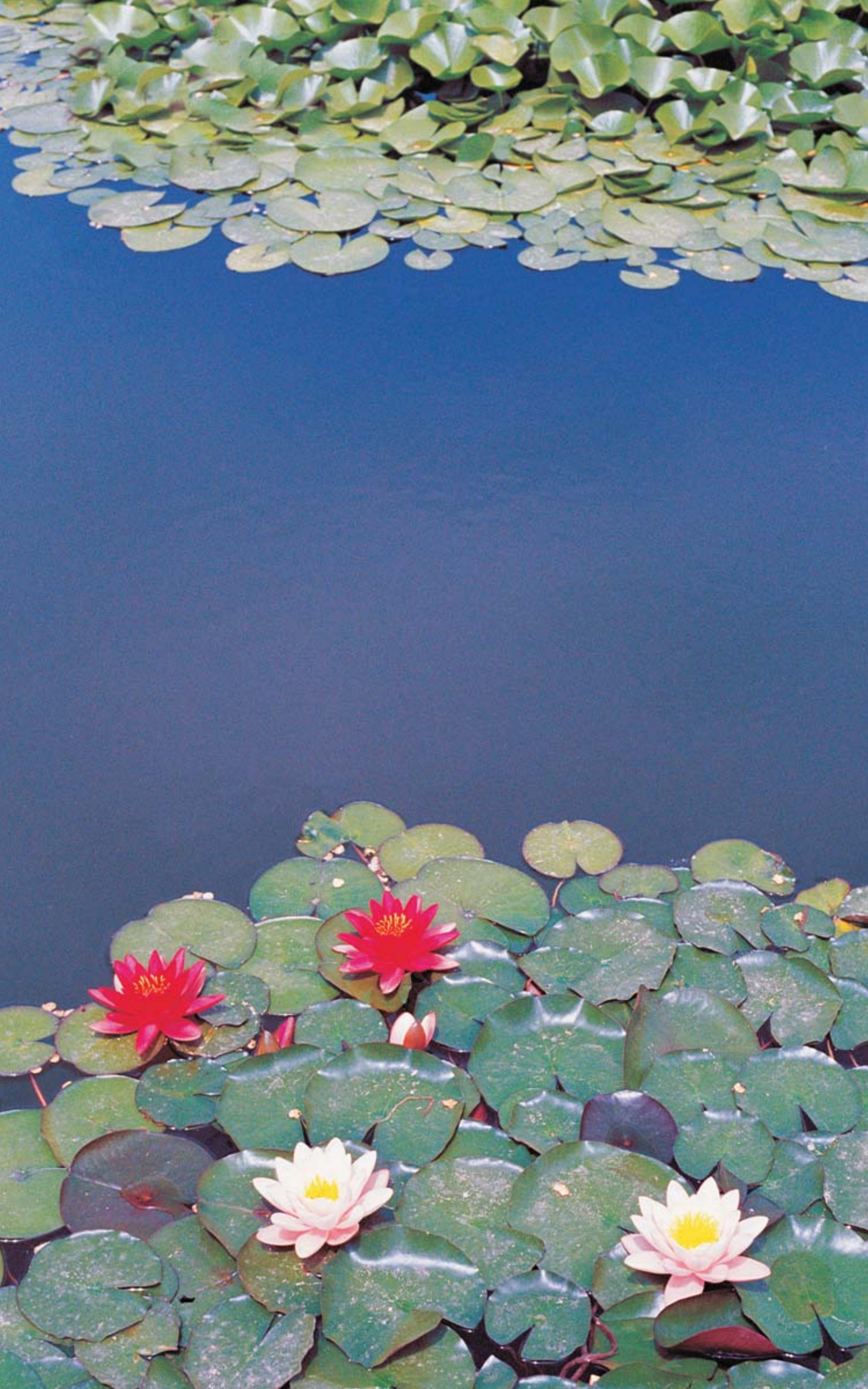
Turkey is a haven for nature lovers, with each region offering its own ecosystem. There are 40 national parks and about 10,000 species of plants.

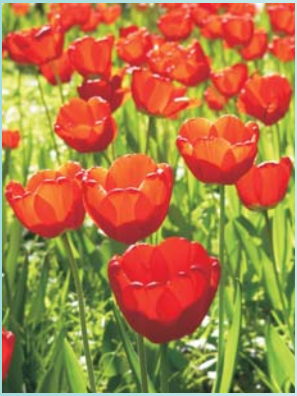
The slopes along the Black Sea coast are covered with forests of oak, maple, beech, hazelnut, chestnut and walnut trees. In between, steep inclines are covered with emerald green **tea plantations**.

The dry, hot summers in the south give rise to subtropical vegetation, including **banana trees** and **date palms**. **Pine forests** tumble down the mountains to the coastline. Inland, there are meadows of **orchids**, **poppies**, **lilacs** and **jasmine**. Village houses are brightened by pink and purple **bougainvillea**. In the Isparta region, southwest Turkey, farmers grow roses for their oil, which is turned into locally branded perfume oil and also exported to France.

The steppe, stretching from Thrace to Eastern Turkey, hides **daisies**, **crocuses**, **violets** and **poppies**. The Alpine slopes of the eastern Black Sea region are covered with **pansies** and **lilies** in the short spring and summer season.

Opposite: Water lilies (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)





Tulips were first cultivated in Istanbul during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. The flower soon became a symbol of beauty and sadness. It was worked into poems and carved into wood and marble. The sultan's kaftans were embroidered were tulips and swords were engraved with the flower before being taken into battle. After a century without its tulips, Istanbul has once again covered its parks with yellow and red tulips.

FAUNA

The mountains, forests and waters around Turkey are home to a myriad of animals. Explore its untouched corners and you will find **jackals**, **wild boar**, **bears**, **fallow dear**, **foxes** and **pheasant**. Archaeological ruins are often grazing land for **sheep** and **wild goats**. There will often be a **Kangal dog** nearby. Kangals are an ancient Turkish breed of mountain dog that are incredibly strong and can be fierce when challenged.

Nature reserves in the Aegean shelter **monk seals** and Dalyan Beach in the Mediterranean is a nesting place for about 300 ***Carretta Carretta* turtles** (loggerhead turtles). They lay their eggs under the sand at night. Baby turtles are hatched about two months later and make their way into the sea.

WARNING: If you are heading to the mountains, watch out for snakes. Among the more dangerous are the **levent viper**, a pale brown snake with dark spots that grows to about one meter/three feet long, and the **Palestinian viper**, a rusty brown color snake with a v-shaped mark on its head and a zigzag on its back.

BIRDING

Turkey boasts about 400,000 indigenous and migratory bird species, including the **black vulture**, which is extinct in other parts of Europe.

The most important species for environmentalists is the **bald ibis**, a strange-looking bird with a pink head. There is a sanctuary for bald ibis on the banks of the Euphrates River at Birecik. A successful breeding program has seen the population at the sanctuary grow to more than 80. The sanctuary offers open access to visitors (donations are welcome). See page 590.

About 800 species of migratory or indigenous aquatic birds also make Turkey their home. Manyas Kuscenneti, near Baliksehir, is one of the best places to see aquatic birds, with more than 200 species such as **Dalmatian pelicans**, **owls**, **heron**, **nightingales** and **ducks**. Sultan Marshes near Kayseri in Central Anatolia has a large colony of **flamingos**. Lake Bafa in the Aydin region is another rich ground for **wetland birds**.

The Gediz Delta at the mouth of the Gediz River has bays, salt marshes and lagoons that shelter **Dalmatian pelicans** and **flamingos**. Lake Tuz, a saltwater lake, has flamingos, **cranes**, **geese** and **gulls**. As well as being a breeding ground for *Carretta Carretta* turtles, the Dalyan Delta has a population of **white-tailed eagles** and **kingfishers**.

AVERAGE MAX. TEMP. (ISTANBUL)

	Celcius	Fahrenheit
Jan	8°	46°
Feb	9°	48°
Mar	11°	52°
April	16°	61°
May	21°	70°
June	25°	77°
July	28°	82°
Aug	28°	82°
Sept	24°	75°
Oct	20°	68°
Nov	15°	59°
Dec	11°	52°

CLIMATE

Turkey's climate varies drastically from region to region. Eastern Anatolia has a harsh mountain climate and bitterly cold winters with temperatures that fall to -30°C. The central plains have hot summers and cold winters with heavy snowfall. The Black Sea region has warm summers with the highest rainfall. The southern and western coasts have typically Mediterranean summers, with soaring temperatures and little rainfall.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

POPULATION

Turkey is a country of more than 70 million people, with a rapidly expanding youth population. In contrast to much of Europe, about a third of the population is between the ages of 12 and 24.

The majority of the people living in the country are Turkish, with **Kurds** being the largest minority group. Arabic-speaking communities, which make up two percent of the population, are clustered in Southeast Turkey near the border with Syria. The country's 70,000 **Armenians** mainly live in Istanbul and around Lake Van in Eastern Turkey.

The northeast Black Sea region, from Pazar to the Georgian border, is home to the country's **Laz** population. They were originally Christians under the Byzantine Empire and later converted to Islam. Traditionally, Laz people have been fishermen and farmers. They speak Lazça (Lazish), though most Laz people also speak Turkish. Like Turks, Laz people are friendly and generous.

© Ankarali Turgut

Kizilay Square, Ankara

Since the 1950s, migration to the cities has been swift. Two-thirds of Turks now live in cities. **Istanbul** is the largest, and home to about a fifth of the country's population. It is a microcosm of Turkey as a whole, with the various minorities and regional migrants each claiming particular districts as their own. Next is **Ankara,** with almost four million people. **Izmir** ranks as the No. 3 city, with 3.2 million people.

This economic migration has created a generation of nouveau riche who like to enjoy their wealth. This can be seen in the swanky restaurants, boutique hotels and rapid house-building along the west coast. In contrast, many cities are also home to people for whom the dream did not work out. The saddest sights are elderly people begging and children who try to survive by selling packets of tissues.

EDUCATION

About 87% of Turkey's population is literate, though rates are higher among men than women. Education is only compulsory for eight years, compared to an average nine-12 years in European Union countries. Higher education is free in Turkey's 53 state universities and many women see it as giving them freedom from the home. There are also 19 private universities.

FAMILY

Family relations are central to the Turkish way of life. Publicly, Turkey is a man's society. However, women rule the home and are in charge of all aspects of childcare, including disciplining children. Extended family members often live with their children or nieces and nephews. Elder family members are greatly respected and looked after.

ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN

A woman's role in Turkey is often perplexing. A poll in a popular Turkish newspaper showed almost nine out of 10 people believed women should be equal in politics and business. However, two out of three people also said a woman should give up her career if her duties to her husband and home are suffering.

WOMEN'S ROLE ACCORDING TO LAW

Following the declaration of the Republic in 1923, one of the most significant elements in the social revolution planned and advocated by Atatürk was the emancipation of Turkish women.

In 1926, a new code of Turkish civil law was adopted which changed the family structure. Polygamy was abolished, along with religious marriages, and child custody became the right of both women and men. A minimum age for marriage was fixed at 15 for girls and 17 for boys. Perhaps most importantly, the equality of inheritance was accepted, as well as the equality of testimony before a court of law.

With the secularization of the educational system, women gained the same right as men to an education.

The right to vote for women was granted at the municipal level in 1930 and nationwide in 1934.

© Jan McGready

Village women

Women in Rural Areas

The new regulations raised the status of women in theory. In reality, little has changed for many women. They are still governed by their father or their husband. Many women marry young and settle into a role as homemaker. In rural areas, women often need the approval of their husbands to work outside the home. Those who hold jobs, usually in the agricultural industry, do it as part of their regular housework. Typically, women working in the fields picking olives earn 50% less than men doing the same work.

Women who live in villages often still wear traditional Anatolian dress, including baggy, floral-patterned trousers known as **salvar**. They live an insular life centered on their families. That does not stop them being incredibly warm and open to visitors, whether Turkish or foreign.

Women in the Cities

Turkish society is full of contradictions. In cities, conservative women wear the veil and keep their arms and legs covered. Often, their younger siblings or daughters wear tight-fitting long-sleeved shirts and skirts with decorative headscarves draped around their necks.

Other women worship Western designer brands such as Gucci and Prada and buy the fake designer bags, shoes and clothes that are sold in abundance in Turkey's stores. These women dye their hair, wear lots of makeup and enjoy more independence in their lives.

Turkish women do hold important posts in the public and private sectors. They are bank managers, doctors, lawyers, judges, journalists, pilots, diplomats and police officers. While even some educated working women face restrictions, particularly when it comes to socializing, others are just as likely as their Western counterparts to go to a bar with friends after work.

MARRIAGE

Marriage is heavily influenced by the respective families and many are still arranged, particularly in Southeast Turkey. There are still marriages within families. This was a tradition started by nomads who lived in small social groups.

Turkey is still deeply conservative on all matters concerning the family and sexuality. Turks are still intolerant of couples cohabiting outside of marriage and of gay relationships.

JUST SAY NO

Turks have several ways of saying "No," though they rarely say *hayir*. Instead, they prefer to use the colloquial *Yok*, or they tilt their heads backwards and raise their eyebrows. This takes some getting used to, but not as much as the alternative. Many Turks simply click their tongues. It does sound rude, but it is not meant to be.

MILITARY SERVICE

Turks hold the army in high regard. Compulsory military service is an important part of a young man's life. It is akin with education and companies prefer men who have completed their military service, as do families seeking husbands for their daughters. For the men sent off to train and guard Turkey's borders, it is not always so popular.

Military service is mandatory for men aged 20 who are not in full-time education and they must serve 15 months as a soldier. University graduates must complete six months as a private soldier or 12 months as a reserve officer. Anyone trying to avoid the call-up faces legal action and will be prevented from traveling abroad.

Aya Sofya was constructed between 532 and 527 AD.

RELIGION

From the first dawn light until after dusk, the **Ezan**, or call to prayer, rings out from grand, marble domed mosques and one-room brick mosques alike. In every village and city, the ***muezzin***, or crier, brings the faithful to prayer five times a day. It is a beautiful and evocative sound. This ritual leaves no doubt that Turkey is predominantly a Muslim nation, even if many people do not live according to strict Islamic rules. Unusually, Turkey is a secular nation and the only Muslim country where people are free to choose their religion.

ISLAM

The Arabic word Islam means, "voluntary surrender to the will of Allah (or God) and obedience to his commands." The message of Islam was spread by the Prophet Muhammad, who was born in Mecca in 571AD. Today, more than a billion people practice the religion, including seven million in the US.

Islam teaches humility, decency, good manners and tolerance. Muslims believe in helping the poor and having respect for their elders and their neighbors.

There are different beliefs in Islam, as there are in Christianity. In Turkey, the majority of Muslims are **Sunni**. They believe the Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Prayers are given in Arabic, and men and women are segregated in mosques. Sunni Muslims abide by the rules, or pillars, of Islam.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

SHAHADAH: Belief that there is no God other than Allah and that Muhammad is his messenger.

SALAH: Prayer is offered five times a day.

ZAKAH: Muslims must make an annual payment of 2.5 percent from their savings and assets. This is distributed to the poor.

SAWM: Fasting during Ramadan or Ramazan, as it is called in Turkey.

HAJJ: Muslims who can afford to should make a pilgrimage to Mecca.

ALEVI MUSLIMS

The alternative branch of Islam in Turkey is Shi'ite Alevi. There are about 20 million Alevis in Turkey. The division arose following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Alevis believe that Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, should have become the next Caliph, or religious leader. Sunni Muslims followed Caliph Hasan, who believed in consensus rule by a college of Imams.

Alevi Muslims pray in Turkish, not Arabic, and do not go to mosques. Instead, men and women pray together at a Cem Evi, or meeting house. Alevi Muslims do not fast during Ramadan and they can drink alcohol. The most important Alevi festival is **Nevruz**, which celebrates the beginning of spring. The left-wing views of Alevi Muslims have resulted in criticism and, occasionally, violence from fundamentalist Muslims.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Ramadan

The holy month of Ramadan is significant to Muslims the world over. The date changes each year according to the lunar calendar. Muslim men and women observe a 30-day compulsory fast and may not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset. After dark, Muslims break-the-fast when they are allowed to have a meal and drink. Children, the sick and pregnant women are exempt from fasting. In most cities, you'll be able to find cafés and restaurants that are open as usual. However, these will be busier later in the evening as people gather to eat and catch up with friends and family. If you are here during Ramadan, plan ahead as trains and buses will be extremely busy with Turks visiting relatives.

The Koran in book form

Ramadan is considered holy because it was the month that the ***Koran*** *was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The concept of fasting is designed to bring Muslims closer to people's suffering and instills discipline and subservience to Allah. The holiday is a time to resolve disputes and renew relationships with friends and family, and is a time for charitable deeds.*

Seker Bayram

The Sugar Holiday, or Şeker Bayram, is celebrated at the end of Ramadan. During the Şeker Bayram, which typically lasts for three days, people indulge with sweets and candy and younger members of the family visit their elder relatives.

Kurban Bayram

The Sacrifice Holiday, or Kurban Bayram, is celebrated two months and 10 days after the Şeker Bayram has finished. This is Turkey's longest holiday and celebrates the near-sacrifice by Abraham of his son, Ismail. In villages and traditional districts, rams, sheep and calves are sacrificed in gardens or on the street and a portion of the meat is given to the poor. Every devout household who can afford to do so should buy an animal to be donated.

These days, many Turks prefer to have a butcher sacrifice the animal or to donate money instead. As with Ramadam, the holiday has also become a very popular vacation time when Turks take to the roads en masse. Visitors to the country should book well in advance if traveling during the festival.

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Islam teaches religious tolerance and this is particularly evident in Turkey. The country has been home to the world's three dominant religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The Roman Catholic and Protestant churches still practice their faiths in Turkey.

Turkey's **Jewish** community traces its heritage to ancestors who fled the Spanish Inquisition in the late 15th century. They were welcomed into Turkey by the Ottoman court and were given land, tax exemptions and other assistance from the government. Many of these new citizens became scholars and diplomats.

The **Syrian Orthodox Church**, headed by a patriarch who is resident in Damascus, has a dwindling number of churches and monasteries around Mardin and Midyat in Southeast Turkey. The church's followers are generally known as Suriyani. They speak Syriac, a form of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus Christ and his disciples.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

TURKISH HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is one of the cornerstones of Turkish life. Turkish people, along with the country's Kurds and Arabs, are incredibly gracious and generous hosts. Visitors will find local people want to chat and offer tea to them wherever they go, and will even go so far as inviting visitors home for dinner. The people take enormous pride in their historical sites and pretty villages and they will often want to take you to see these. Ask directions from a local and you may be taken half-way across a city in case you get lost. Travelers can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the depth of kindness shown and let their Western skepticism prevail. Often, your hosts will not expect anything in return and they will not try to sell you something. The exceptions are the young gigolos employed by carpet stores to lure in wealthy women.

Turkish people are very understanding about foreigners' different customs. For Turks, whatever religion you follow, whichever country you are from, whichever language you speak, you are "God's Guest" and deserve to be welcomed in the best manner.

MINDING YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Turks are very expressive and use their hands and arms constantly to make gestures. This can make it easy to communicate with a Turk even if you do not speak Turkish. Be careful which gestures you use. Western hand signals can mean totally different things in Turkish. Some of them are plain offensive and should not be used.

TURKS AT HOME

Turks tend to socialize outside the home. Being invited for dinner with a Turkish family is a huge honor. As in Western countries, you can take flowers, chocolates or a bottle of wine as a gift for your host. However, be careful when taking wine as not all Muslims drink alcohol.

You should take off your shoes when entering someone's home. Turks pride themselves on the cleanliness of their home and do not appreciate having the dirt from the street taken inside. Often, your host will have a pair of indoor shoes or slippers for guests to wear. If you do not like that idea, you can always take along your own pair.

A meal in a Turkish house is an elaborate affair. The table will be teeming with home-cooked food. It is customary to try everything, even if you are on the brink of bursting.

TURKISH BATHS

Turkish baths have held an important place in daily life since Medieval times because, even though most homes did not have bathrooms, there is a great emphasis on cleanliness in Islam.

© Nevit Dilmen

Inside a modern hamam

A trip to the *hamam* was most popular during the Ottoman Empire. For many women, this was a chance to leave their homes and spend time with their friends, as baths are traditionally much more than just a place to cleanse the skin. The *hamam* broke down social ranks and was a place where people of every class – young and old, rich and poor – could bathe together. Little has changed for Turks today. Most houses have bathrooms and yet Turks still visit the *hamam*.

Bathhouses are often beautiful stone buildings with marble slabs where you can relax and steam your skin. You can also pay separately for a massage. Bathhouses offer either a separate section for men and women or different times for each to visit. Hotels in resort will sometimes have mixed bathing. Do not feel intimidated about going into the *hamam*. It is a relaxing, invigorating experience. Towels are usually provided, along with wooden shoes. Women may feel more comfortable if they wear a bikini or swim suit.

CARPETS & KILIMS

Carpet weaving has been intertwined with Turkish history since its very beginning. The origins of knotted rugs spread from Central Asia west through Persia and Anatolia with the growing Turkish empires.

Designs have evolved through the ages. Early Seljuk carpets had geometric designs and floral motifs and by the 14th century, animal figures emerged on the rugs. In the 16th century, designs became more elaborate, as weavers took their influences from the expanding Ottoman Empire. Rugs designed for sultans were often made of silk and drew on intricate Iranian designs and incorporated flowers such as tulips, roses and blossoms.

Kilims were not only functional textiles used as bedspreads, but also showpieces illustrating the weaving skills of young girls who made them for their dowries. A girl who did not know how to weave kilims had little hope of finding a husband.

Kilims were valuable household possessions, the result of long weeks of hard work, and no one would dream of laying them on the floor as people do today. Instead, kilims were hung on walls or used to cover seats and beds.

Turkish carpets are made from wool or silk. The thread is combed before being spun into a fine thread on spindles. It is then colored using vegetable dyes. Traditionally, the five predominant colors used in kilim designs are dark red, dark blue, brown, black and white, with green, yellow and blue featuring in a secondary role.

The quality of a kilim is dependant on the density of knots used. The more knots, the higher the standard of the carpet. Silk carpets have a beautiful sheen and the design is as prominent on the back as it is on the front.

Today, women across Turkey weave carpets and kilims for the commercial market in private workshops and co-operatives, giving them a much-need income. The designs on each carpet carry the hopes and fears of the women who weave them.

Hereke Carpets

The most striking carpets were made in Hereke, a coastal town on the bay of Izmit, where the first weaving workshop was established in 1843. Hereke carpets are hand-woven and famed for their fine weave. They use silk thread or fine wool yarn, often gold or silver.

Today, Hereke carpets are also produced at factories outside of the town. The term now refers to the exquisite quality. Hereke carpets remain among the finest and most valuable examples of any woven carpets in the world.

BUYING A KILIM

If you want to take home a carpet or kilim as a souvenir of your trip then it pays to visit carpet shops on your own. Visit with a guide and the price you pay will increase to include their commission.

HUBBLE-BUBBLE PIPES

A hubble-bubble pipe, or ***nargile***, is one of the oldest traditions in Turkey. The original *nargile* came from India and was made of coconut shells. Its popularity spread to Iran, where the word *nargile* means

Hubble bubble pipes (image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

"coconut" in Persian. The pipe completed its evolution in Anatolia when brought there in the 17th century. It became part of coffee house culture and has remained so for centuries.

The popularity of the *nargile* declined after World War I, as smokers switched to cigarettes, but students revived it during the 1990s and the trend spread. Traditional coffee shops and trendy cafés alike have pipes. In Istanbul, there is a whole row of cafés near the Istanbul Modern Museum that are dedicated to the hubble-bubble pipe. Colorful beanbags and sofas are strewn along the street and people of all ages spend a couple of hours smoking a pipe.

As well as being used to smoke Turkish tobacco, the new fashion is for the water pipe flavored with strawberries, apples or cappuccino. The smoke is noticeably cooler than cigarette smoke, and lightly intoxicating.

Nargiles are often beautifully crafted; antique pipes are highly prized. The pipe consists of a clear, white or colorful bottle etched with designs. The hose is decorated with beads and embroidery and the mouthpiece is made of porcelain.

COFFEE HOUSE CULTURE

Coffee houses are another mainstay of Turkish life. When coffee was introduced to the Ottomans in the 16th century, it became an instant hit and coffee houses and stores were opened everywhere to grind the beans.

For generations men have gathered in the coffee house to talk over matters of the day, smoke hubble-bubble pipes and play backgammon, or *tavla*, another traditional pasttime. The coffee house is the preserve of the Turkish male.

EVIL EYE

Wherever you go in Turkey, whether it is a restaurant, hotel or even a taxi you will see the ***boncuk nazar***, or charm, to ward off the evil eye. They can be blue glass beads or pottery with a black eye painted in the center. Mothers pin small beads on their children's back or hang them over a crib. They are also found at the entrances to homes. According to folklore, when something is praised it risks attracting the evil eye of jealousy. The charm deflects this.

There are several stories about the origin of the blue eye. One story suggests the blue eye is associated with the Crusader marches of Christians across Turkey.

It is considered lucky for travelers to buy a *boncuk nazar* charm or bracelet. You can pick them up for a couple of dollars at markets and stores all over the country. In Istanbul, there is a street at the far end of the Egyptian Bazaar in Eminönü that is lined with stores selling every kind of *boncuk nazar.*

MUSIC

The music of Turkey is incredibly diverse. Classical music was cultivated by the Ottoman Empire and the cosmopolitan nature of the empire meant that influences came from all of its corners, with compositions from Greece, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Persia.

The rousing music of the Ottoman Janissary army was used to fire up the soldiers and instill fear into an enemy before the battle had even begun. It is less popular these days, though it is still played in some villages.

The **reed pipe** music played to accompany the *Sufis,* or whirling dervishes, was also considered Turkish classical music and was played in the Ottoman court. It can be still heard in Konya and at tourist restaurants in Istanbul.

Anatolian-style music called **Saz** is performed in bars and restaurants. Saz music became popular because it was played on government-sponsored radio and television. **Fasil** music, which is closely associated with Turkey's Roma Gypsies, is also played in bars.

While traveling around the country, **Arabesque** will be unavoidable. Arabesque, which has its roots in Arab bellydance music, is heavily influential in Turkish pop music. In the 1970s, Western pop music swept across the country and Turkish singers and musicians began composing their own brand with more Western-influenced lyrics about love and relationships.

POP MUSIC

Turkish pop music hit the headlines in 2003 when **Sertab Erener** won the Eurovision Song Contest with her song *Every Way That I Can*. She is one of Turkey's most popular singers with album sales of over four million.

By far the country's most famous export is **Tarkan**, a good-looking Turk who was born in Germany. He hit it big in the 1990s and his albums have since sold millions of copies. In 2000, he released his first album in the US, entitled *Tarkan*, and its sales went platinum in Latin America. *Come Closer*, his first English-language album, was released in 2006.

DANCE

Bellydancing is a blend of an Oriental dance and a tribal worship of the mother goddess. Ancient Turks believed in the power of the shaman and extolled the magic of women's ability to create life.

Gypsy tribes, known as *Chengi*, first drew dancing out into the street. They developed it into a piece of performance art with a mix of hip work, shimmies and facial expressions, as well as veil dancing and finger cymbal playing.

The gypsies originally hailed from India and traveled west into Afghanistan and Persia before migrating into Turkey and south to North Africa. They earned a living by entertaining people with their dances.

The rules of Islam meant *Chengi* women could only dance for other women. They first danced for a fee at wedding parties and

© Lksstock/Dreamstime.com

hamams. The spell of the gypsies soon enthralled the Ottoman court and they were invited to dance for the women of the harem.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the restrictions placed on *Chengis* were lifted and they were able to dance for men's entertainment. The dancers remained extremely popular until the end of the 19th century. Bellydancing is now primarily a tourist attraction.

Turks love **folk dancing** and each region has its own festivals and dances. Some of them mark the return to the village of men from mountain pastures or military service. Others are celebrations at religious festivals. The most famous are the ***horon***, from the Black Sea region, and the ***hora***, which originates from Thrace. In Southeast Turkey, travelers can see the ***halay*** and, traveling north to Erzurum, the **bar** is the popular dance.

TURKEY ON FILM

The first film screening in Turkey was held in the Yildiz Palace in Istanbul in 1896. Half a decade later, the Turkish film industry took off and enjoyed its heyday a little prematurely between 1965 and 1975.

FLICKS TO REMEMBER

Turkey's mountains, coastline and cities have long been captured on celluloid. Some films have drawn in tourists; others have had a devastating impact.

From Russian With Love, 1963
The best Bond film ever made. Some of the scenes were shot in the Underground Cistern in Istanbul. It is a loose connection, but any excuse to watch the film again.

Topkapi, 1964
This heist thriller is set in Istanbul following the fortunes of an unlikely gang who bid to steal an emerald-studded dagger from Topkapi Palace. Peter Ustinov gives the film's best performance as the fall guy. Watch the film and then go to see the dagger on display in Topkapi Palace.

Midnight Express, 1978
An Oscar-winning film about a US tourist who tries to smuggle drugs out of Turkey and is subjected to a hellish prison sentence. It gives a terrible and unfair view of Turks, and had a damaging effect on the tourism industry for years.

Gallipoli, 1981
The Mel Gibson film depicts the disastrous attempt by Allied forces to take control of the Dardanelles during the First World War.

Troy, 2004
Brad Pitt and Orlando Bloom star in this big-budget epic depicting the love between Paris and Helen, and the ensuing Trojan War. It is visually stunning, even if scholars have questioned the facts. It will catapult Troy on to the tourist trail.

Turkish cinema has attempted to push boundaries even though directors and producers have sometimes been met with censorship and violence. In 2001, a Greco-Turkish film festival was held in Athens, which included the screening of a jointly produced film called *The Boatman*. The film told the story of a love affair between a Greek singer and a Turkish fisherman. Greek ultra-nationalists, unhappy with the alliance, attacked the cinema that hosted the festival.

In 2002, Turkey's official bid for Best Foreign Film at the Oscars, *Big Man, Small Love*, was banned by its own government. It is the story of a five-year-old Kurdish girl whose guardian is killed when a police raid on her home goes wrong. A Turkish judge, who does not speak any Kurdish, takes in the little girl, who does not speak any Turkish. The film explores their unlikely friendship.

SPORTS

Traditional Sports

Turkey's sporting history slips from the bizarre to the sublime. **Grease wrestling** is the traditional national sport. There are several stories purporting to be the origins of grease wrestling. According to one tale, the competition began in 1360 when Süleyman Paşa invited men to fight for Allah and the sultan. By dawn the next day, the last two men were dead. These days, the competition is held each June in Kirkpinar, outside Edirne. Men cov-

Grease wrestling, Istanbul

ered in olive oil and wearing tight black trousers (to stop their opponents getting a good grip), wrestle in a series of bouts to determine the champion.

Even camels get in on the wrestling act. Nomadic tribes, who depended on camels for their livelihood, invented the idea of the humped-back beasts wrestling. Tulu male camels are still bred and trained for annual contests, held in Aydin and Selçuk between December and March. In reality, the event is now more of a comedy spectacle led by the antics of the referee. The wrestling is really the typical pushing or butting male camels do to seek precedence over a rival in the mating stakes.

Çirit Oyunu is a game similar to polo, except with a Turkish twist. The game involves two teams of horsemen armed with wooden sticks. Rather than using the poles to hit a ball and score goals, as in polo, they throw the sticks at each other to win points. It was a popular war game with competitions held in the Hippodrome in Istanbul. The game was outlawed in 1826 because it was deemed too dangerous. It is now played on ceremonial occasions in Erzurum and Kars in Eastern Turkey.

Modern Sports

Soccer is the contemporary national sport. It is played throughout the country, though the clubs based in Istanbul – Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Beşiktaş – have been dominant both in Turkey and in international competition. Galatasaray became the first Turkish team to win a European title when they beat Arsenal to pick up the UEFA Cup in the 1999-2000 season. Turkey's international team made it to the semi-finals of the FIFA World Cup in 2002 and came third in the championships after eventual champions, Brazil, defeated them. Turkey's success was not repeated in 2006 when the country failed to qualify for the World Cup Finals.

Basketball is the second-biggest sport. It was first played in Turkey at a college in Istanbul in 1904. Efes Pilsen SK is the most successful team, having won the Turkish Basketball League championship 12 times.

Travel Information

THE FACTS

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

A **passport** is required of all visitors.

US visitors can purchase a single entry 90-day sticker **visa** at the port of entry for $20 cash. A multiple entry visa costs $87 and is available from consulate offices in the US. All travelers are photographed upon entry into Turkey.

For more information, contact the **Embassy of the Republic of Turkey** in Washington DC, ☎ 202-612-6700, or the consular call center, ☎ 888-566-7656 between 8:30am and 5:30pm Central Time from anywhere in the US. The website is www.turkey.org.

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Canadian citizens can obtain a multiple-entry sticker visa for $45 at the Turkish International Border Gates. This visa allows you to stay in Turkey for a maximum period of three months.

CUSTOMS

Travelers are permitted to bring into the country the following allowances: two bottles of wine or spirits; 120 ml bottle of perfume; 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars or 500gms of tobacco.

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday through Friday is the normal working week. Business hours for government offices and banks are from 8:30am to noon, 1:30pm to 5pm. In summer, the day starts at 7am and finishes at 2pm. During the month of Ramadan the workday tends to be shorter. Hours for shops vary according to the location.

PUBLIC & RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

There are two types of holiday in Turkey: public holidays fall on the same day each year and religious holidays change according to the lunar calendar. Banks and government offices away from resorts are closed during holidays.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

There is no free healthcare in Turkey and all medical services must be paid for. Medical treatment can be expensive, so you should ensure you have adequate travel insurance before you enter the country. Take photocopies of essential documents.

COMMUNICATIONS

To make an overseas **telephone** call, dial the international code (00), the country code (1 for the US or Canada), then the local number.

USEFUL NUMBERS	
Directory Assistance	118
International Operator	115
Collect calls	131
Emergency	112
Police	155
Gendarme	156
Fire	110

To make a call within the country, dial 0, then the three-digit area code followed by the local number.

Public phone booths accept coins or tokens (*jetons*), which can be bought from post offices (PTT) or shops. Calls from hotels can be expensive, so check out rates in advance. It is cheapest to buy an international telephone card, available at PTTs and newspaper stands. Cell phones are widely used and the network coverage is good.

Internet cafés are everywhere. They are cheap and often have the latest equipment, including web cams. The downside is that they are packed with children playing computer games and teenagers smoking. Wireless Internet is available in some hotels and airports, including Istanbul's Atatürk Airport.

EMBASSIES

US Embassy and Consulate
110 Atatürk Bulvari, Kavaklidere, Ankara; ☎ 0312-4555555

Other US Consulates
Kaplicalari Mevkii Sokak 2, Istinye, Istanbul; ☎ 0212-3359000

Girne Bulvari 212, Yuregir, Adana; ☎ 0322-3466262

Izmir; ☎ 0232-4648755

Canadian Embassy
Cinnah Caddesi 58, Çankaya, Ankara; ☎ 0312-4092700
Toll-free (within Turkey) 00800 14-2200149
ankra@international.gc.ca; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/ankara

Canadian Consulate
Istiklal Caddesi 373/5, Beyoğlu, Istanbul; ☎ 0212-2519838
Toll-free (within Turkey) ☎ 00800 14-2200149

TIME ZONE

Local time is GMT plus two hours, seven hours ahead of US Eastern Standard Time.

TAXES & TIPPING

Tax, or **KDV**, is included in stores and restaurants. Hotels sometimes quote room rates inclusive of tax and at other times rates are exclusive of tax. Check whether tax is included when asking for rates.

Tipping is not expected in cheaper restaurants and cafés. In smarter restaurants, add 10% to the value of your bill if it is not already included, provided you are happy with the service. Taxi drivers do not expect tips, though they often round-up a fare to avoid paying small change.

WATER SUPPLY

Drink **bottled water**, which is cheap and widely available. Ensure the seals on the caps of bottles have not been tampered with, particularly when buying from a street vendor.

ELECTRICAL SUPPLY

Electricity is 220 volts AC. An adaptor will be necessary and can be bought from airports and electrical shops in Turkey. Standard European adaptors also work. Anti-power surge plugs are useful to regulate supply when charging cameras, MP3 players and laptops.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

WHEN TO VISIT

The optimal times to visit depend largely upon where you are going.

The best months to visit the **Aegean and Mediterranean** coasts are April through June and September through October, when the climate is warm with little rainfall. If you prefer empty beaches and fewer beer-swilling tourists, the west coast is quieter between November and March, though the sun is not guaranteed.

Both **Istanbul and Ankara** are hot in summer and snowy in winter. They can be visited year-round, however, April-May and September-October are the most pleasant times for exploring.

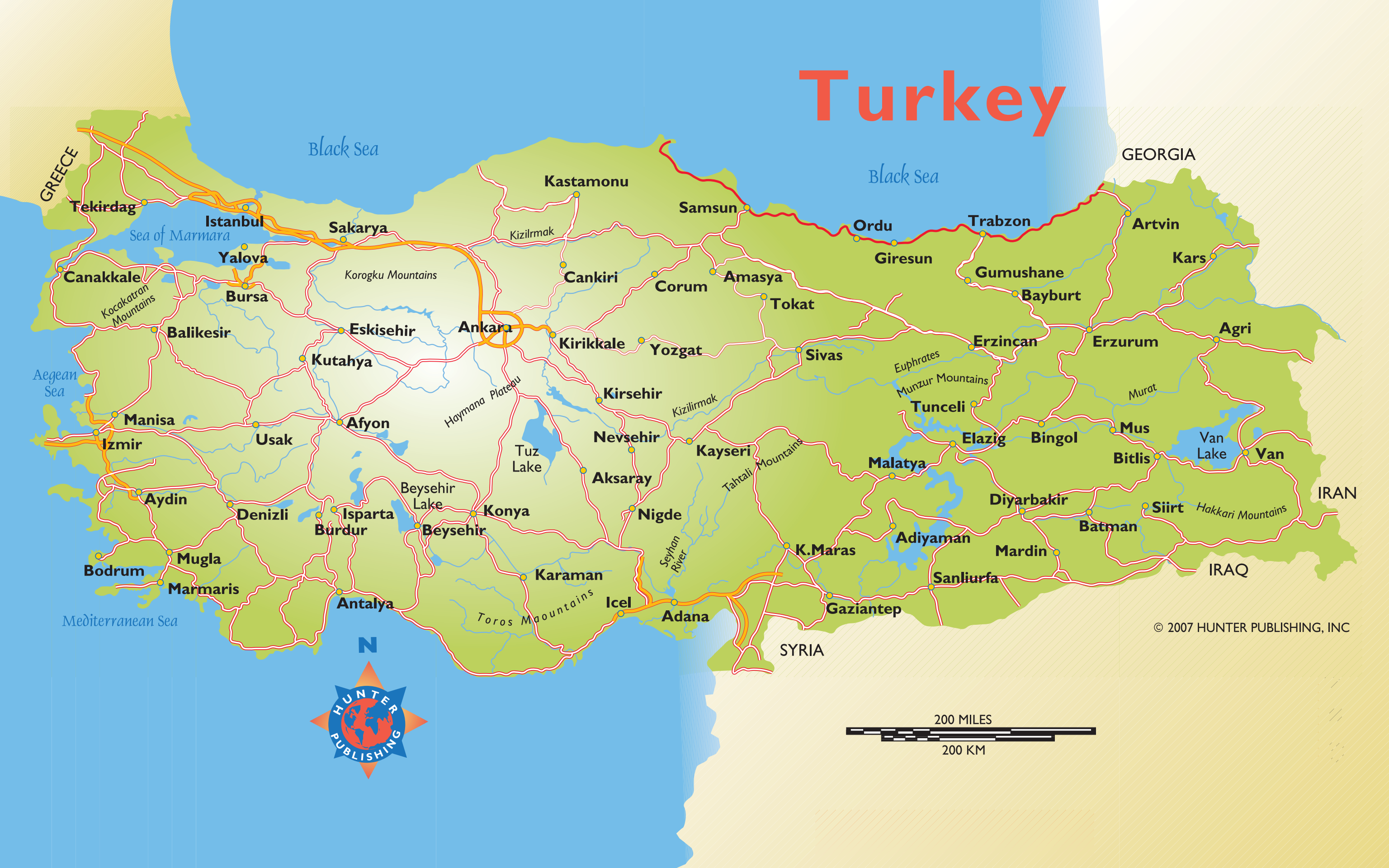
Visit **Central and Eastern Turkey** between June and October. They look stunning under typically heavy winter snowfall. However, you risk difficulty traveling around because roads can be closed.

Southeast Turkey, on the other hand, is swelteringly hot in the summer and there can be problems with menacing scorpions. It is best to visit this region anytime except summer.

PACK YOUR BAGS

PACKING TIPS

If you are planning to travel around Turkey rather than stay in one place, then do yourself a favor and take only the essentials. Test drive your bag, once packed, by carrying it up and down a couple of flights


Turkey
GREECE
Black Sea
Black Sea
GEORGIA
Tekirdag
Istanbul
Sea of Marmara
Sakarya
Kastamonu
Samsun
Ordu
Trabzon
Artvin
Kars
Giresun
Gumushane
Bayburt
Yalova
Canakkale
Bursa
Korogku Mountains
Kizilrmak
Cankiri
Corum
Amasya
Tokat
Kocakatran Mountains
Balikesir
Eskisehir
Ankara
Kirikkale
Yozgat
Sivas
Erzincan
Erzurum
Agri
Kutahya
Euphrates
Munzur Mountains
Murat
Aegean Sea
Haymana Plateau
Kirsehir
Kizilirmak
Tunceli
Mus
Van Lake
Van
Manisa
Afyon
Usak
Izmir
Nevsehir
Kayseri
Elazig
Bingol
Bitlis
Tuz Lake
Malatya
Aksaray
Tahtali Mountains
IRAN
Beysehir Lake
Aydin
Denizli
Isparta
Burdur
Konya
Beysehir
Nigde
Diyarbakir
Siirt
Hakkari Mountains
Batman
Seyhan River
K.Maras
Adiyaman
Mardin
IRAQ
Mugla
Bodrum
Marmaris
Karaman
Sanliurfa
Antalya
Icel
Adana
Gaziantep
Mediterranean Sea
Toros Mountains
N
SYRIA
HUNTER PUBLISHING
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200 MILES
200 KM

of stairs. If it is too much to handle after five minutes, imagine it after three weeks of traveling.

If you are taking a suitcase on wheels, pack shoes and heavy items at the base of the suitcase near the wheels.

Pack evening clothes in tissue paper to limit creases.

T-shirts and cotton clothing should be rolled to save space.

Woolen and fleece sweaters should be packed flat.

Use clear plastic bags for small items such as underwear and socks, which otherwise wind up at the bottom of your backpack or case. Plastic bags also are useful for things like spare batteries.

PACKING LIST

- ☐ Daypack
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Earplugs (for airplane travel)
- ☐ CD or MP3 player
- ☐ Lock for backpack or case
- ☐ Slash-proof money wallet
- ☐ Sleeping bag with carry case
- ☐ Turkish phrasebook
- ☐ Waterproof jacket
- ☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
- ☐ Beach towel
- ☐ First aid kit (see page 84)
- ☐ Adapter plug and surge protector strip
- ☐ Camera and charger or batteries and film
- ☐ Sink and bath plug (not all hotels have plugs)
- ☐ Wet wipes – essential when using public toilets
- ☐ Basic toiletries (imported brands are expensive)

ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN

Single women are advised to wear a cheap **wedding ring** to ward off unwanted attention from men.

A **pashmina wrap** serves as a blanket on the airplane, an elegant evening wrap and a headscarf for visiting mosques.

Take your own **sanitary products**, particularly Tampax, which are not available in Turkey. Hairdryers, on the other hand, are widely available in hotels.

WHAT TO WEAR

Turkey is a secular nation, but away from the beaches it is conservative and you should dress accordingly. Turkish women are often very glamorous, but they do not wear skimpy clothes. Dressing like a local will stop you getting undue attention and make you feel more comfortable. Generally, shoulders and knees should be covered, especially in villages or major cities. Travelers should not visit religious sites wearing shorts, short skirts or sleeveless tops. Women should cover their heads in mosques.

Sturdy leather **hiking boots** are recommended for hiking and for exploring historical sites. Do not scrimp on your boots, as there is so much to see on foot. Take one pair of sandals, sneakers or shoes that can be worn during the day and evening. Snowshoes may be necessary for Central and Eastern regions in the winter.

GETTING HERE

BY AIR

Turkish Airlines and Delta Airlines offer the only direct nonstop services to Turkey from the US.

Turkish Airlines flies direct to Istanbul from New York and Chicago. ☎ 718-751-26-00, lines are open Monday-Friday, 9am-5:30pm (PST), passengerservices@tknyc.com, www.turkishairlines.com. In Canada, tickets for Turkish Airlines are sold by **Stellar Travel Inc.**, ☎ 866-I-FLY-THY (435-9849), info@stellartravel.ca.

Delta Airlines operates direct flights to Istanbul from New York. It has connecting flights to Istanbul from Toronto via New York. ☎ 800-221-1212, www.delta.com; travelers with hearing or speech impairments can call ☎ 800-831-4488.

Several international carriers operate flights to Turkey from North America via their home countries. This obviously makes the flight time longer. However, the fares can be cheaper.

British Airways flies from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Toronto to Istanbul via London. The airline has direct flights from London Heathrow to Ankara and Dalaman airports via its franchise partners. There are also flights from London Gatwick to Izmir. US and Canada, ☎ 800-AIRWAYS; Toronto, ☎ 416-250-0880; www.britishairways.com; travelers with hearing impairments can call ☎ 866-393-0961.

Easyjet, the low cost UK airline, has flights from Luton Airport, 51 km/32 miles north of London, to Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen International Airport on the Asian side of the city, about 50 km from Taksim Square. UK ☎ 08706-000000; www.easyjet.com.

Lufthansa operates daily flights to Istanbul from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Montreal via Munich and Frankfurt. US, ☎ 800-645-3880; Canada, ☎ 800-563-5954; www.lufthansa.com.

Alitalia flies from New York to Istanbul via Milan and Rome. ☎ 800-223-5730; alitaliasupport@alicos.net; www.alitalia.com.

Austrian Airlines has flights to Istanbul from New York, Washington DC and Toronto stopping in Vienna. US, ☎ 800-843-0002; Canada, ☎ 888-817-4444; www.aua.com.

One US tour operator selling discounted airfares to Turkey can be accessed on the web only, **www.aesu.com**.

Security at Turkish airports is tight and time consuming, especially at Istanbul's Atatürk International Airport. Arrive for domestic flights at least one hour prior to departure. You should arrive at least two hours ahead of departure for international flights.

Transporting Mountain Bikes & Skis

Quality mountain bikes are difficult to hire in Turkey. Most airlines, including Turkish Airlines and British Airways, will allow you to transport one sports item free of charge, so you can take your own bike. Skis and snowboards can be hired locally, though these can also be checked into the hold.

BY SEA

FROM GREECE: There are regular ferry and hydrofoil services, including car ferries, between Turkey's Aegean Coast and the Greek Islands during the summer months. Routes include Lesbos-Ayvalik, Chios-Çeşme, Samos-Kuşadasi, Kos-Bodrum, Rhodes-Marmaris and Symi-Datça. In the low season, the only scheduled service is between Kos and Bodrum. Visitors traveling from mainland Greece will need to take a ferry to one of the Greek Islands before continuing to Turkey.

FROM ITALY: There is a car and passenger ferry from Ancona to Çeşme once a week between March and October. A weekly car and passenger service operates from Brindisi to Çeşme between June and September.

The Marmara Line website www.marmaralines.com has timetable information and ticket sales.

A very user-friendly travel agents' website is **www.ankertravel.net**. It gives information on ferries between Northern Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Turkey. The agent is efficient at answering enquiries.

FROM NORTHERN CYPRUS: Ferries run all-year-round between Girne in the Turkish Republic of **Northern Cyprus** and Tasucu near Silifke. A daily catamaran service makes the trip in two hours; car ferries take four to five hours. In summer, catamarans operate between Girne and Alanya twice a week. The crossing takes 3½ hours. Contact **Fergun Shipping** in Turkey, ☎ 324 741 2323, www.fergun.net.

BY CAR

If you are driving across Europe or the Middle East into Turkey be prepared for red tape and an amazing journey. Drivers bringing cars into Turkey must show their car registration documents and international driving license at the point of entry. Drivers arriving from Europe must have a Green Card, which can be purchased at the border. It is possible to bring a car into Turkey for six months, after which time you may be liable for import tax.

BY BUS

International buses are cheap and reasonably comfortable given the long journeys. The main connections into Turkey are via Austria from northern Europe and Greece from southern Europe. Rest stops are made at roadside cafés where there are toilets, but usually no showers. Reservations are recommended for long-distance routes.

Several Turkish bus companies operate international routes, however, only **Varan Tourism** (www.varan.com.tr) and **Metro Turizm** (www.metroturizm.com) have user-friendly websites giving fare and route information. Tickets can purchased online or at a bus station.

BY TRAIN

Turkey's location as a gateway out of Europe and into the Middle East makes it one of the world's great countries for train travel. Unless you are stretched for time, do not miss out on a heady mix of scenery, languages and cultures by taking a train into Turkey.

The **Balkan Flexipass** will give you unlimited first-class rail travel across Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey. The ticket can be purchased for 5, 10 or 15 days travel and costs between $197 and $413.

Many routes offer access to Turkey, including a two-day journey from Budapest on the *Balkan Express*, a 20-hour ride from Thessaloniki, Greece and a five-night, once-in-a-lifetime journey aboard the *Venice-Simplon Orient Express*, which departs from Paris once a year and passes through France, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria (☎ 401-351-7518, www.orient-express.com)

For more information on train travel to Turkey, visit these websites:

www.tcdd.gov.tr is the Turkish State Railway's revamped website giving information in English on fares and timetables for domestic and international routes.

www.seat61.com is an excellent resource, with detailed information on routes, fares and timetables.

www.raileurope.com has timetable information, tickets and rail passes.

CAUTION: There have been some robberies on trains by men who mix barbiturate into food and drinks. Never accept beverages or food from people you do not know.

GETTING AROUND

BY AIR

Turkey is well served by airports across the country, making it easy to cover long distances in a short period of time. Some internal flights are routed via Istanbul. Fares for internal flights are cheap and you only have to check in one hour before depature.

Turkey has four domestic airlines. Tickets can be booked online or at the airport.

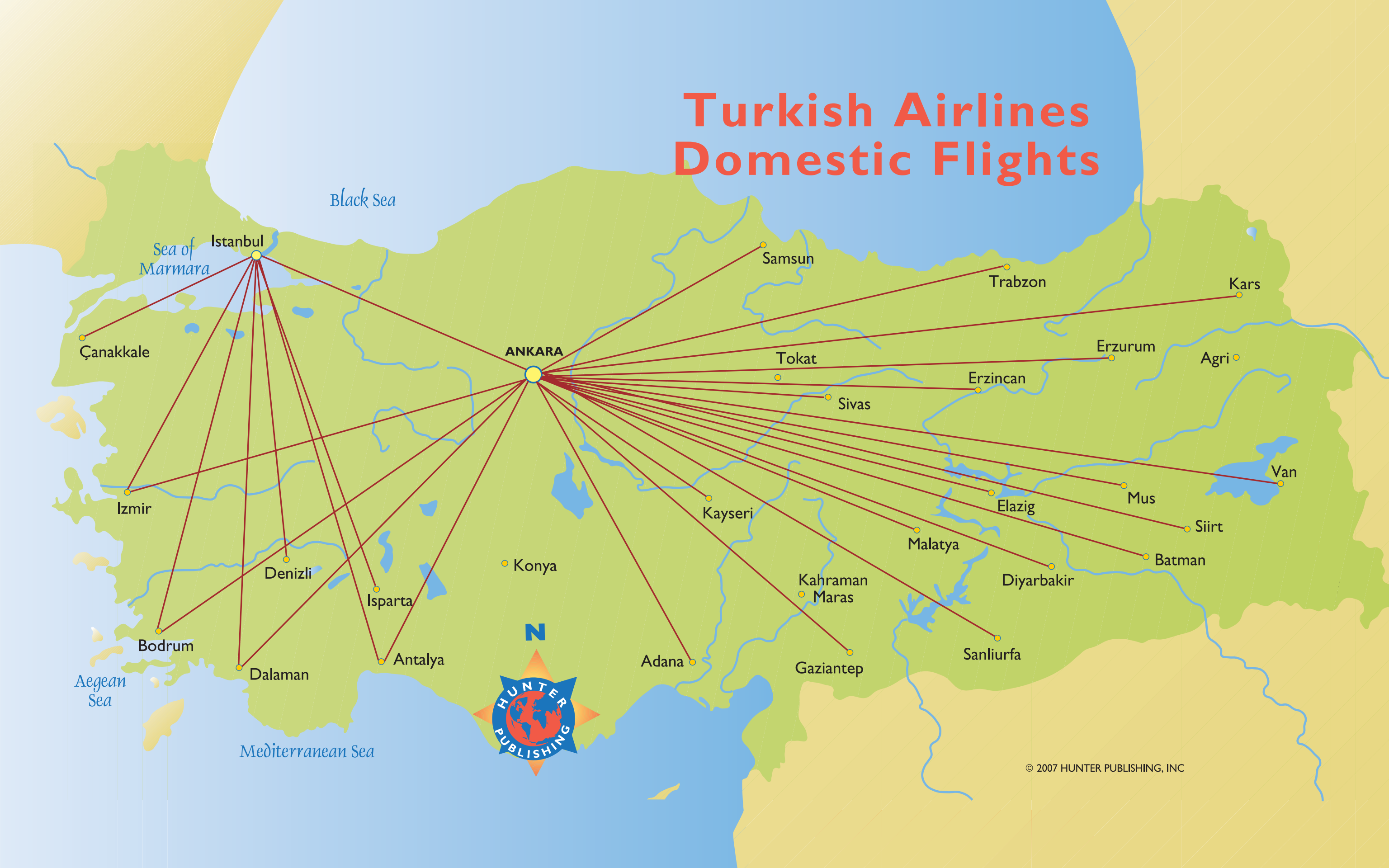
Turkish Airlines, ☎ 0212-4440849, www.turkishairlines.com

Cyprus Turkish Airlines, www.kthy.net

Onur Air, www.onurair.com.tr

Flyair, www.flyair.com.tr

Turkish Airlines Domestic Flights


Black Sea
Sea of Marmara
Istanbul
Çanakkale
Samsun
Trabzon
Kars
ANKARA
Tokat
Erzurum
Agri
Erzincan
Sivas
Izmir
Van
Mus
Elazig
Kayseri
Siirt
Malatya
Batman
Denizli
Konya
Kahraman Maras
Diyarbakir
Isparta
N
Bodrum
Antalya
Adana
Gaziantep
Sanliurfa
Dalaman
Aegean Sea
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Mediterranean Sea

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BY SEA

© Afganaf

Ferry in Istanbul

Turkey's waterways give travelers a fast way of getting around and a chance to see its beautiful coastline.

ISTANBUL-YALOVA: This is a fast ferry running continuously to connect Istanbul's Yenikapi with Yalova across the Sea of Marmara. It is the best way to make excursions from Istanbul to Bursa and Iznik. The ferry takes one hour and 10 minutes and runs roughly every two hours starting at 7:30am. Timetable information can be found at www.ido.com.tr.

ISTANBUL-IZMIR: The overnight cruiser between Istanbul and Izmir sails daily between June and September. The ferry operates in both directions every second day. It departs at 4:30pm and arrives at 9am the next day. Cars, motorbikes and bicycles are allowed. Contact **Anker Travel**, a tour agent that can book tickets for the ferry, on ☎ 256-6124598, www.ankertravel.net.

ÇANAKKALE-ECEABAT: Services run from 4am until midnight every day. The journey takes 30 minutes. Ferries leave Eceabat every hour on the hour. They depart from Çanakkale every hour on the half-hour.

BODRUM-DATÇA: Car and passenger ferries sail every day during the summer, usually starting in May and ending in October. In the low season, ferries run twice a week. Contact the **Bodrum Ferryboat Association**, ☎ 0252-3160882, www.bodrumferryboatassociation.com.

BODRUM-MARMARIS: The hydrofoil departs twice a day from Bodrum every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. You disembark in Gelibolu and travel the rest of the journey to Marmaris overland by bus, which takes about 20 minutes. The cost of the bus is included in the ticket price. **Bodrum Express Lines**, ☎ 0252-3161087, www.bodrumexpresslines.com.

BY CAR

You can get almost everywhere by public transport in Turkey, but only a car will give you the freedom to enjoy striking views or explore mountain villages. Turkey is a vast country and distances between cities or historical sites are often daunting.

Traveling by car means trips can be done in roughly half the time it would take by bus.

Turkey's road network is extensive, though the standards vary from fast-flowing highways to pot-holed dirt tracks through villages.

Driving standards are not high and getting around major cities can be terrifying. Turkish drivers often do not use indicators and mirrors when changing lanes – they prefer to honk their horns and move. Drivers often overhang two lanes and overtake on blind corners. Advice from the US government for drivers to be defensive at all times should be taken seriously.

The cost of hiring a car is expensive and gas prices are high at about $1.50 per liter.

DISTANCES FROM ISTANBUL

Ankara	453 km/281 miles
Amasya	671 km/417 miles
Antalya	724 km/450 miles
Çanakkale	320 km/199 miles
Diyarbakir	1,365 km/848 miles
Edirne	229 km/142 miles
Hatay	1,130 km/702 miles
Konya	668 km/415 miles
Samsun	737 km/458 miles
Şanliurfa	1,263 km/785 miles
Trabzon	1,083 km/673 miles
Van	1,637 km/1017 miles

Car Rental Companies

Urent Rent A Car, ☎ 0242-3118212; www.rentacartur key.com

Avis Rent A Car, US & Canada, ☎ 800-331-1212; www.avis.com

Sixt, US & Canada, ☎ 888-SIXTCAR (749-8227); www.e-sixt.com

Auto Europe, US & Canada, ☎ 888-223-5555; www.autoeurope.com

Hertz, ☎ 800-654-3131; www.hertz.com

Alamo, ☎ 800 GO ALAMO (522-9696); www.alamo.com

Rules of the Road

Driving is on the right. Seat belts are mandatory and driving after consuming alcoholic drinks is prohibited. The speed limits are I20 kmh/75 mph on motorways, 90 kmh/56 mph on main roads and 50 kmh/31 mph in town centers. Gas stations that are open 24 hours can be found on major highways. Attendants will fill up your tank, check your tires and wash your car for a small tip.

Maps

Tourist offices in Istanbul and Ankara have road maps available free of charge. Alternatively, maps can be purchased from **Tulumba**, www.tulumba.com, ☎ 866-TULUMBA (885-8622).

Accidents

If you have an accident, immediately report it to the police, or *jandarma*. The police report will be certified. The driver must then take his passport and the police report to the customs authority. After this, you can finally take the car to a garage for repair. Do not move the car until the police have finished the paperwork.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS	
Traffic Police	154
Jandarma	156

For useful phrases and translations of road signs, see page 618.

BY BUS

Every city and town in Turkey is linked by bus or minivan services (see *Dolmus & Taxis*, below). Buses are comfortable, with air conditioning and reclining seats. Tickets cost roughly $2 per hour that you will be traveling. Most bus companies serve hot and cold drinks included in the price of a ticket; some also serve cake. Buses stop regularly at roadside cafés for toilet breaks and meals on longer trips.

Tickets can be booked at the bus station (*otogar*), by telephone or, in some cases, online. Hotel receptionists are often the best source of timetable information and will also reserve seats for you. Tickets can then be paid for at the *otogar*.

Bus stations range from ramshackle huts held together by the advertising boards of various bus companies, to glitzy buildings that are a stark contrast to the scrubland around them. Unfortunately, there is often little difference in the facilities available. They usually have cafés selling great pastries and some have Internet cafés. The toilets are often basic, to say the least, and there are no showers.

Intercity bus companies are not allowed to go into city centers. Instead, they stop at an *otogar* on a highway or the outskirts of a city and passengers travel the rest of the way into town on a bus company shuttle or a *dolmus*.

> *A quirk of Turkish buses is that seat numbers on tickets are staunchly abided by, even if the bus is half-empty. Women are generally seated together at the front, with single men at the back. It is customary for men not to sit next to a woman they do not know. Do not attempt to sit on a different seat because you will only have to move to your designated seat.*

A downside of bus travel is that dubbed films or loud Turkish music are pumped out constantly.

WARNING: City bus stations are crowded, noisy and can be intimidating. Bus companies employ men to attract customers, which they attempt to do by yelling out destinations, particularly at foreigners. Often, these people are harmless and are very helpful guiding travelers to their bus and even carrying their bags. This has its obvious dangers and I would advise you to be cautious.

The Big Bus Companies

Varan Turizm, www.varan.com.tr, has services from Istanbul to Ankara and down the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts as far as Gaziantep in Eastern Turkey. The website is in English with online booking.

Metro Turizm, www.metroturizm.com.tr, toll-free in Turkey, ☎ 444 3455. Metro covers the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, Central Anatolia and Black Sea regions. The website has timetables and online booking. You can buy a countrywide pass.

Ulusoy, www.ulusoy.com.tr (Turkish only), has services across the country. Book tickets at ☎ 0212-4441888.

Kamil Koç covers most regions. Book at its Istanbul office, ☎ 0212-4440562.

Pamukkale runs services to Antalya, Bodrum, Fethiye and Izmir, Kaş and, of course, Dizili for Pamukkale. You can book at ☎ 0212-4443535.

BY TRAIN

The website of the **Turkish State Railways** (www.tcdd.com.tr) has recently been revamped with English language and a funky ad for its new high-speed rail links. Until that service is commissioned, train travel within Turkey is painstakingly slow and the network does not cover the entire country. Long-distance trains will often take twice as long as buses. However, you can book a sleeping compartment, which is more comfortable than a seat on a bus.

Timetables and fares can be found on the website, while tickets can easily be purchased locally at train stations. You can buy a TCDD rail pass giving unlimited travel on the rail network for one month. The Ekspres Tren Tur Karti costs $61 and entitles you to a reclining seat. The Yatakli Tren Tur Karti costs $245 and entitles you to a sleeping car. All sleeping cars must be booked in advance.

BY *DOLMUS* & TAXI

Yellow taxis are widely available in towns and cities in Turkey. They can flagged down on streets or booked from hotels and restaurants. Be sure that the meter is on day rate, or *günduz*, from 6am until midnight. The meter should read night rate, *gece*, between midnight and 6am.

A *dolmus* is a minibus or large car that operates as a shared taxi along a designated route. It is cheaper than a bus and passengers can get out anywhere along the route. The cheap fares are set by the municipality and are displayed at the front of the vehicle. The downside of travel by *dolmus* (which means stuffed) is that you have to wait for it to fill up before it goes. How-

Dolmus

ever, if you let the driver know you are a tourist, you may have the luxury of being dropped at the door of the your destination.

MONEY MATTERS

CURRENCY

In 2005, the **New Turkish Lira** (YTL) was introduced to simplify the currency. Six zeros were deleted from the existing Turkish Lira. From 2006, only the new currency is in circulation and is once again known as the Turkish Lira. There are 100 Kurusu to a lira.

Turkish Lira is available in 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Turkish Lira bank notes, as well as 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Kurusu and 1 Turkish Lira coins.

BANKS, ATMS & EXCHANGE OFFICES

ATMs are widely available. Exchange rates are often better in Turkey than at home and cash can be exchanged commission-free in many banks and exchange offices.

Banks are open Monday to Friday 8:30am to noon and 1:30pm to 5pm. In summer, they sometimes open at 8am and close at 2pm. Hours can also be shorter during the month of Ramadan.

TRAVELERS' CHECKS

Travelers' checks can be exchanged in banks and some post offices. Foreign currency checks may incur charges of between 10 and 25%.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are accepted in cities and towns. It is a good idea to inform your credit card company that you will be traveling, as some stop cards used in Turkey to guard against fraud.

POST OFFICES

Turkish post offices are recognizable by their yellow and black "PTT" signs. Major post offices are open 8am-midnight Monday to Saturday, and 9am to 7pm on Sundays. Small post offices are open from 8:30am-12:30pm and 1:30pm to 5:30pm and may be closed at weekends.

Post offices sell stamps and telephone cards and tokens. Some cash travelers' checks and exchange cash.

STAYING SAFE

Theft is heavily frowned upon, but it always pays to be cautious. Keep cash to a minimum and use a slash-proof money wallet either around your waist or neck. Do not travel with expensive jewelry. Use a hotel safe where available.

There are two types of police in Turkey: civil police, known as ***polis***, and military police, known as ***jandarma***. In small towns, there may be only one type to fulfill the functions of both. In resorts and major cities there are also **tourist police**, who are easy to find on the streets.

If you need to report a crime, go to the nearest police station. There are usually English-speaking people at police stations in tourist areas. Otherwise, you can request a translator. You will be asked to submit and sign a statement. Request a copy of completed documents in case you need them later.

SPECIAL CONCERNS

TERRORISM

There have been several terrorist incidents in tourist resorts and in Istanbul in the past five years involving Kurdish PKK/Kongra Gel groups. The number of incidents has increased in the past year after a ceasefire was ended, and some have resulted in casualties and deaths. Visitors are advised to be cautious, however, my personal experience is that Turkey is as safe to travel around as any Western country.

EARTHQUAKES

Turkey has suffered devastating earthquakes and is at risk of further seismic jolts. In 2005, the southeast cities of Van, Adana and Hakkari suffered moderate earthquakes. In 1999, earthquakes in Izmit and Istanbul within three months of each other killed more than 17,000 people.

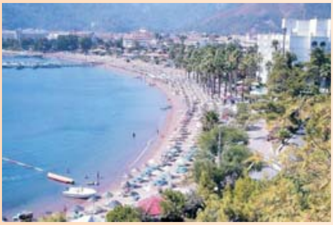
BIRD FLU

Cases of avian flu were found in Turkey in 2006. A strain of the disease has been passed to humans who have been in direct contact with live animals and several people have subsequently died. At the time of writing, the World Health Organization is not recommending restrictions on travel to Turkey. As a precaution, you should not visit bird or poultry farms or markets and should avoid close contact with live poultry. Washing your hands frequently with soap and water is advisable.

Symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to ordinary flu symptoms and can appear suddenly. They may include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, sore eyes and muscle aches. If you exhibit these symptoms while abroad or within seven days of returning home, you seek medical advice, according to the WHO.

DISABLED TRAVELERS

Turkey is slowly adapting to meet the needs of disabled travelers. Some of the larger hotel chains have rooms catering to the needs of wheelchair users. Generally, facilities in cities and resorts are not designed for wheelchair access. Parts of Istanbul, such as Beyoğlu and Sultanahmet may be particularly difficult for wheelchair users because Beyoğlu is built on a steep incline and Sultanahmet has lots of cobbled streets. Kalkan and Turunç are also built on steep hills.



The Turkish Culture and Tourism Office recommends the resorts of Marmaris, Içmeler (shown here), Dalyan, Fethiye/Calis Beach and Side to wheelchair travelers because they are relatively flat.

Several companies are dedicated to services for travelers with disabilities. **Flying Wheels Travel** (☎ 507-451-5005, www.flyingwheelstravel.com) offers escorted tours and cruises and private tours in minivans with lifts. **Accessible Journeys** (☎ 800-846-4537, www.disabilitytravel.com) caters specifically to slow walkers and wheelchair travelers and their families and friends.

MossRehab (www.mossresourcenet.org) provides a wealth of tips on accessible travel. **The Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality** (☎ 212-447-7284; www.sath.org) offers resources for all types of disabilities and gives informed recommendations on destinations, access guides, travel agents, tour operators, vehicle rentals and companion services.

HEALTH

DOCTORS & DENTISTS

English is widely spoken among health-care professionals. Hotels and embassies can advise on local doctors and dentists. Medical services can be expensive, though dentistry is usually cheaper than in the West.

PHARMACIES & MEDICATION

Travelers should ensure they have enough medication to last during their trip, as well as a copy of the prescription or a letter from your health-care provider explaining that the medication has been prescribed for you. All medications should be stored in carry-on baggage, in their original containers with clear labels.

Pharmacies are generally well stocked and pharmacists are knowledgeable in advising on the treatment of minor illnesses. English-speaking doctors are easy to find and foreign-run hospitals are available in larger cities and resorts.

FIRST AID KIT

A first aid kit should include: Band-Aids, adhesive bandages, gauze, tweezers, scissors, cotton-tipped applicators, antiseptic cream, antiseptic wipes, heat spray, diarrhea medication, antihistamine, aspirin, ibuprofen, digital thermometer, cold remedies, insect repellent containing DEET (Jungle Formula is the best on the market), sunscreen and aloe gel for sunburns.

Remember, a medical kit is only useful if it is easily available. It should be carried in a car or in carry-on luggage on excursions. Basic first aid kits and specialized sports and family medical kits are available from pharmacies and outdoor stores in the US. These websites sell a range of medical kits: **Adventure Medical Kits**, www.adventuremedicalkits.com; **Chinook Medical Gear**, www.chinookmed.com; **Harris International Health Care**, www.safetravel.com; **Travel Medicine, Inc**, www.travmed.com; **Wilderness Medicine Outfitters**, www.wildernessmedicine.com.

VACCINATIONS

The World Health Organization recommends vaccines against **Hepatitis A**, **Malaria** and **Typhoid** for travel to the Middle East region, which includes Turkey. A booster may be required for tetanus-diphtheria and measles. Discuss your travel plans with a health-care provider to determine which vaccines you will need.

HOSPITALS

Major cities and resorts have private hospitals that maintain international standards.

RESTROOMS

There are public restrooms in shopping centers, mosques, and main rail and bus stations. However, finding facilities that meet Western standards is hard. Toilets are often the stand-up variety for men and women, even in restaurants and theaters. Dress smart and you can use restrooms in the lobbies of good hotels without any problems.

MEDIA

For Turkish journalists, the subjects of the military, Kurds and political Islam are highly sensitive and can lead to arrest and criminal prosecution. Radio and television stations have had their broadcasts suspended for airing sensitive material. But some of the most repressive sanctions against journalists have been lifted as part of reforms intended to meet European Union entry requirements. A press law, introduced in 2004, pledged to stop blocking broadcasts or newspapers because of editorial indiscretions. Another notable change was the removal of prison as a punishment for unintentionally insulting the state. In practice, however, little has changed, according to media organization Reporters Sans Frontier. Journalists are still imprisoned and fined, forcing them into self-censorship, the group says on its website.

NEWSPAPERS

Hurriyet, www.hurriyetim.com, and ***Milliyet***, www.milliyet.com, are mass-circulation daily newspapers.

Cumhuriyet, www.cumhuriyet.com, is a left-wing daily.

Zaman, www.zaman.com, is a mass-circulation pro-Islamic newspaper with an English version

Turkish Daily News, www.turkishdailynews.com.tr, is a liberal English-language newspaper.

Sabah, www.sabah.com.tr, is an independent newspaper.

TELEVISION & RADIO

Television is enormously popular in Turkey and the main source of information for its citizens. About 97% of Turks have a television set and there are almost 300 channels, according to official statistics. The radiowaves are also lively, with about 1,000 private radio stations.

MAJOR TELEVISION NETWORKS

Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) is a state broadcaster operating four national networks.

Star TV was the first broadcaster to break the state monopoly.

Show TV a widely-watched private network.

Kanal D is another major private network.

CNN **Turk** is the local version of the CNN news network.

MAJOR RADIO STATIONS

Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) is a state broadcaster airing cultural shows and popular and Turkish folk music.

Show Radyo is a commercial music channel.

Capital Radio is a commercial pop station.

Radyo Foreks is a news station.

FOOD & DRINK

CUISINE

Turks love to tell visitors that their cuisine is among the finest in the world and can rival French and Italian cooking. It is a lofty aspiration and probably misguided. As long as you do not anticipate cooking that could impress the best French chefs, you should enjoy the Turkish food.

Turks are purists when it comes to food. The country grows its own fruit and vegetables and raises its own poultry and cattle. Everything must be fresh and a great home-cooked meal is easy to come by in restaurants. Each region has its own specialty dishes and, as a rule, the farther east and south you travel, the spicier the food and the better the cooking.

Tableside preparation of gözleme, *filled pancake*

VEGETARIANS

Turks are great meat eaters and do not always understand the needs of vegetarians. There are a few dedicated vegetarian restaurants in major cities. Outside of those, Turks are enormously hospitable and will try to cook a suitable meal for you if you tell them you cannot eat meat (*et yok*).

Istanbul, Ankara and the Mediterranean resorts have excellent French, Italian and Asian restaurants catering to locals as much as tourists. They tend to be smart restaurants and are priced accordingly.

You can sample the varied flavors of Turkish cuisine while taking a tour of the country with ***Caravan-Serai Tours*** *(☎ 800-451-8097, www.caravan-serai.com). The travel agency has a 17-day tour spanning Istanbul, Bolu, where the famous Mengen cookery schools are based, the Black Sea region and Southeast Turkey, where the dishes have a distinctly Arab influence.*

A DAILY FEAST

BREAKFAST: Turks enjoy a variety of local produce at breakfast. You can expect to be served white cheese, tomatoes, cucumber, olives and eggs, as well as jam, honey, butter, fresh-baked bread and tea. Hotels

© Rainer Zenz

Kebab sandwich made with thick pita bread

sometimes serve Western-style cereal and croissants. If you are on the run, visit a patisserie to pick up some of the wonderful sweet breads served plain or with sausage or cheese. They are served warm and make a great breakfast for a couple of dollars. Many patisseries (*pastahane*) serve free glasses of tea if you eat inside.

LUNCH: Generally, lunchtime restaurants specialize in one kind of dish or cooking technique. **Kebab** houses serve grilled or baked meat dishes. The **Pideci**, another specialty restaurant, serve freshly baked thick flat bread piled with toppings such as cheese and eggs or *sucuk* (a spicy salami). They also serve another favorite snack, ***lahmacun***, a tasty kind of mini pizza, topped with ground lamb, onions and spices. One of the best options for lunch is a ***lokanta***, an inexpensive restaurant serving a variety of cooked meat and vegetable dishes. You should expect to have a full stomach for less than $5.

DINNER: An evening meal is a leisurely affair and an important part of the day for families and friends. Being invited to dinner with a Turkish family is considered a great honor. Dinner usually begins with a dazzling array of hot and cold appetizers, similar to *tapas*, called **meze**. A typical meze will include vegetables cooked in olive oil and served cold and a variety of spreads for bread, including *ezme*, a hot tomato and onion paste, *haydari*, which is a thick garlicky yogurt dip, and *cacik*, a thinner version with slices of cucumber, olive oil, and parsley.

Afterwards, you may be served ***sigara boregi***, think pastry rolls filled with ground meat or spinach and cheese. Try the ***dolma*** (pepper stuffed with rice and tomatoes) and ***patlican salatasi*** (pureed eggplant). Vine leaves and peppers are stuffed with meat, beans, rice or vegetables. Small portions of grilled mussels, baby squid and meat dishes will lead into the main course.

DESSERT: Turks have a sweet tooth and there are lots of sticky, gooey desserts to choose from. Among the most famous sweets is ***baklava***, made from flaky pastry filled with pistachio and drowned in honey.

© Kultigin

Baklava

Baklava and sweet ***boregi*** are eaten as snacks with coffee in the many patisseries across the country. Another delicious dessert is ***firinda sutlac***, a baked rice pudding, which is particularly good along the Black Sea coast. More often, a platter of fresh melon, peaches, apricots, mandarin oranges, pears and apples will follow a meal.

OFF THE GRILL

Doner *being sliced*

Kebabs, or *kebaps*, are dishes of plain or marinated meat either stewed or grilled. Almost every district of Anatolia has its own *kebap* specialty. The most popular ones are **Doner kebab**, which is sliced roast meat, **Şiş kebab**, cubes of lamb grilled on a skewer, and **Iskender**, spicy Doner meat on bread with a rich tomato and yogurt sauce. The best by far is the **Patlican**, or eggplant, kebab.

Other meat dishes can be a mixed grill, combining T-bone steak, known as *bonfile*, *pirzola* (lamb chops), liver and kidneys. **Kofte kebabs** are spicy lamb meatballs served with rice and grilled vegetables. Meat dishes are accompanied by vegetables and pilav, a soft, buttery rice.

Fresh fish is available in abundance, and giant portions of turbot, blue fish, mullet and sea bass are served grilled. Along the Black Sea coast, **anchovies** are plentiful and are used in a number of dishes, including the popular ***hamsi pilavi***, a mixture of anchovies and rice.

SPECIALTIES

Turkish cooking is much more extensive than grilled meat and kebabs. Each region has its own specialties and delicious home-cooked food can be found at restaurants everywhere. Among the popular dishes are ***karniyarik***, a dish of eggplant, split open and stuffed with minced lamb, tomatoes and currants. ***Tas kebab*** is slow-cooked lamb stew served with rice and salad. ***Gözleme*** is a handmade pancake filled with white cheese and spinach, mince meat and potatoes, or chocolate. They are cheap and delicious. ***Manti*** is a dish of small dumplings filled with meat and served with lashings of garlic yogurt and paprika.

© Nerostrateur

Manti

Thick natural **yogurt**, made from cow, sheep or goat's milk, will likely feature at some point during your meal. Yogurt is served as a drink called *ayran*, a breakfast dish with honey or stewed fruit, and a side dish with kebabs.

A variety of tasty **soups**, *çorba*, are served on street corners and in restaurants. Some of the most popular ones are *yayla*, yogurt and rice soup, and *ezo gelin*, a mixture of red lentils, bulgur, rice, tomato paste, hot pepper and mint. Turks also eat *Iskembe*, a tripe soup believed to be a hangover cure.

Turkish delight, or lokum, is one of Turkey's great exports. It tastes even better in Safranbolu or Istanbul. There is a great variety of Turkish delight. Some are flavored with fruits such as strawberries, while others are filled with nuts such as pistachios. If those do not tempt you, try vanilla, coconut, mint or rose water.

STREET FOOD

A walk through any town will be filled with temptations. Men stand on street corners with huge trays or carts of ***simit***, a circular bread similar to a bagel covered with sesame seeds. They make a ridiculously cheap breakfast or snack. ***Kebabs*** are sold out of the open windows of cafés for about a dollar. Street markets are loaded with nuts, fruit and sweets that are impossible to resist.

© Barbarossa

Simit

DRINKS

COFFEE

Coffee was brought to Istanbul in 1555 by two Syrian traders. By the mid-17th century, Turkish coffee became a part of elaborate ceremonies involving the Ottoman court. Coffeemakers, known as *kahveci usta*, with the help of over 40 assistants, ceremoniously prepared and served coffee for the sultan. Women socialized with each other over coffee and sweets. Men socialized in coffee houses where they discussed politics and played backgammon. Over the years, Turkish coffee houses have become social institutions where people come together and talk.

TEA

Turkish tea is brewed constantly in shops, restaurants and homes in a two-part kettle known as a *samovar.* These are often set on stoves that also serve as heaters. Tea is strong and bitter and always served black in small glasses with a tucked waist. Turks raise an eyebrow at Westerners who do not take sugar with their tea.

© Bertil Videt

RAKI

Raki is the national drink. It is made of raisin or grape spirit and redistilled with aniseed. Raki is known as Lion's Milk because of the milky white color it turns when water or ice is added. Make no mistake, Raki is incredibly potent, with about 50% alcohol, but is a pure drink leaving no hangover. Raki is served in a tall, narrow glass accompanied by a glass of water.

RAKI RULES

Drinking Raki is one of the must-do things while in Turkey. Here are some tips on enjoying the national tipple:

- Wait until everyone has been served, then join in the toast. Do not raise your glass higher than everyone else.
- Add water to the Raki.
- Never mix Raki with other spirits. You will feel terrible.

WINE

Turkey has a long history of producing wine along the Mediterranean, Aegean and Central Anatolian regions. It produces some good red and white wines, though they are often overpriced compared with other countries in Europe because of taxes. Doluça, Çankaya, Sarafin and Kavaklidere are leading brands.

To make a toast, say *serefe*, pronounced SHEY-re-FEY. The toast means, "To your honor." As a guest, clink glasses with your host so the rim of your glass is lower than the rim of their glass. This is a sign of respect.

NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

If you want unflavored carbonated water, ask for soda. Naturally carbonated mineral water is called ***maden suyu*** and artificially carbonated water is known as ***maden sodasi***.

Fruit juice is thick and natural. The best fruit juices tend to be bottled.

Ayran is a salty yogurt drink. It is delicious and good for the stomach. ***Boza*** is a thick winter drink made from bulgur wheat, while ***sahlep*** is a hot, sweet winter drink made from powdered orchid root.

WHERE TO EAT

Most hotels serve buffet-style breakfasts. **Pastry shops** are another option for breakfast or even lunch. They have wonderful *simit*, sweet bread rolls and savory rolls filled with cheese, spinach and tomato. Endless cups of tea are usually included in the price.

Lokantas serve *kebabs*, stews and soup. They cater to workers and are very inexpensive. They do not have a menu; instead, you choose your dish at the counter. Restaurants tend to be relaxed and most are reasonably priced. They stay open for as long as they have customers.

If you cannot wait until you get to Turkey to sample the food, you can find a wealth of information on cuisine, recipes and the history of the Ottoman kitchen at ***www.turkishcook.com****.*

ACCOMMODATION

Every type of accommodation is available, including luxurious hotels with rooftop pools and spas that meet their guests' every need. The trend of boutique accommodation has swept Turkey and you can find both quirky and gorgeous hotels. At the opposite end of the scale, campsites are an economical option. Travelers who want to meet Turkish families can stay in a *pansiyon* or guesthouse.

Turkey is a tourist country and many hotels, guesthouses and campsites open only in the summer, between April and October. If you are traveling any other time of year, be sure to check that your accommodation has heating and year-round hot water.

HOW TO BOOK

Many hotels have websites and e-mail addresses for direct bookings. However, if you book online and do not receive confirmation a few weeks before your departure, confirm your reservation by telephone.

You can negotiate a room rate – particularly if you arrive in person, which is good for people who are touring the country independently. Ask to see a room before agreeing to stay and ensure breakfast is included in the price.

For a wide choice of hotels, go to www.hotelguide.com.tr. Also, note that tour agents often have block bookings and can offer rooms at discounted prices. It is worth checking before booking direct.

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

HOTEL CHAINS

Turkish, US and European hotel chains are prominent along the west coast and in cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Konya and Trabzon.

Hilton, www.hilton.com, ☎ 800-HILTONS

Sheraton, www.starwoodhotels.com, ☎ 800-598-1753

Best Western, www.bestwestern.com, ☎ 800-780-7234

Hyatt, www.hyatt.com, ☎ 888-591-1234

Four Seasons, www.fourseasons.com, ☎ 800-819-5053

Swissotel Hotels & Resorts, www.swissotel.com, ☎ 212-756-3884

Dedeman, www.dedemanhotels.com, ☎ 0800-2114444 toll-free in Turkey

BOUTIQUE & HISTORIC HOTELS

It is easier than it once was to find unusual places to stay. Historic buildings and individually designed small hotels can be great places to stay and make a trip even more memorable. Restored Turkish houses and old caravan inns often have wonderful stories attached to them. The best boutique hotels have the owner's personality stamped on them. Check www.nisanyan.net for boutique hotel suggestions.

CAVE HOTELS

One of the most amazing experiences is to stay in a cave hotel in Cappadocia. Many of the caves are lavishly decorated, though budget options are available. Book early as they are in great demand. See pages 517-520 for details.

APARTMENTS & VILLAS

There is a wide choice of villas and apartments with pools and terraces or gardens giving travelers complete independence. They tend to be concentrated in the resorts of southwest Turkey.

NOTE: *There has been a building boom in recent years, so be careful not to book a place in the middle of a building site. The better option is to rent a cottage and enjoy the same freedom with more charm.*

HOSTELS & PANSIYONS

Accommodation rates are so reasonable that there are few youth hostels. Some universities rent out their student accommodation during holidays. The best choice for budget accommodation is a *pansiyon* or guesthouse. This may be one room in a family home or an entire building. Some have en-suite facilities in every room, though many have shared bathrooms. *Pansiyons* often have bed and breakfast and half-board options.

CAMPING

The best campsites are along the coastal areas. They come with showers, restrooms and restaurant facilities, and often cost as much as a cheap hotel. Generally, you are free to camp in most rural areas as long as it is not stated otherwise. Be careful not to start fires in forests especially during the hot, dry summertime.

SHOPPING

Turkey is a shopper's paradise. Upscale boutiques, colorful bazaars and street peddlers are crammed into every town. It is often hard to resist making a purchase, especially when everything on offer looks like a bargain. Of course, not everything is a bargain. Perfume sold by street traders may just be cheap or it may be little more than tap water. Carpet sellers and pottery factories often pay commission to tour operators and that cost is passed on to customers.

DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN

Shopping is lots of fun, and haggling is part of the experience. The golden rule is *never pay the asking price.* Mark-ups on goods can be huge, especially for carpets, leather and jewelry, because customers are expected to bargain hard. As a rule, cut the price in half and then decide if it is low enough. Do not be afraid to use the phrase *çok pahali,* "very expensive." Unless an item is extremely unusual, it is likely you will find it in a market around the corner, so be prepared to walk away.

USEFUL WEBSITES

OFFICIAL INFORMATION

Republic of Turkey website, **www.turkey.org**

Turkish Embassy, **www.turkishembassy.org**

Ministry of Culture and Tourism, **www.kultur.gov.tr**

Tourist Information Office, **www.tourismturkey.com**

Directory of Tour Guides, **www.turkishguides.org**

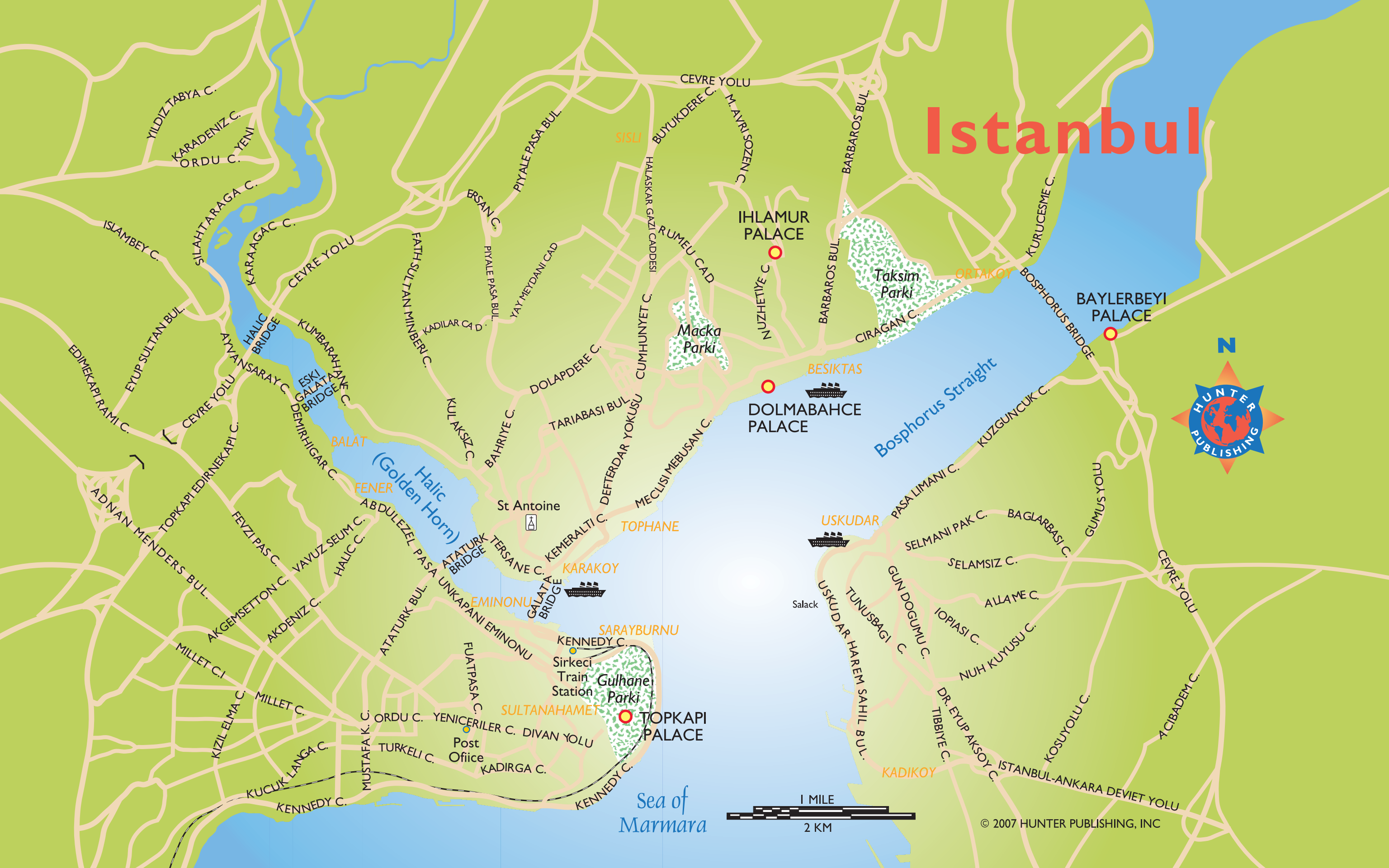
GENERAL INFORMATION

www.travelguide.gen.tr includes tour agencies, hotels and general information

For lifestyle, cultural and sporting information, see **www.mymerhaba.com**

For up-to-date details of concerts and activities, view **www.theguide.com** and **www.timeout.com**. Both have printed book versions that can be picked up at bookstores in cities.

Opposite: Handmade slippers for sale (© Baloncici/Dreamstime.com)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ATATURK BRIDGE
EMINONU
SARAYBURNU
KENNEDY C.
Sirkeci Train Station
Gulhane Parki
TOPKAPI PALACE
SULTANAHAMET
FUATPASA C.
ATATURK BUL.
ORDU C.
YENICERILER C.
DIVAN YOLU
Post Ofiice
KADIRGA C.
TURKELI C.
MUSTAFA K. C.
KUCUK LANGA C.
KENNEDY C.
Sea of Marmara
TOPKAPI EDIRNEKAPI C.
FEVZI PAS C.
VAVUZ SEUM C.
HALIC C.
AKGEMSETTON C.
AKDENIZ C.
ADNAN MENDERS BUL.
MILLET C.I
MILLET C.
KIZIL ELMA C.

Istanbul

The second you land in Istanbul two things hit you: how vast it is and how chaotic. The cauldron of noise builds in the morning with the first call to prayer. As the city springs to life, ferries and tankers weave their way across the Bosphorus Strait from Asia to Europe and traffic chokes the streets. Hundreds of fishermen line the Galata Bridge in search of their daily catch to sell in cafés nestled below, while seagulls swoop and squall. At the end of the bridge, locals crush into the dark passageways at Eminönü's spice market and along the warrens of the Grand Bazaar for another day of haggling.

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Trade has, for the past 2,500 years, been the lifeblood of Istanbul. The city's location made it a prominent trading route and its inhabitants cling to that tradition. In Istanbul, it seems everyone is trying to sell you something, from the street peddlers offering fake perfume and shoe shines to markets with their elaborate displays of fish, nuts and Turkish sweets.

The history and geography of Istanbul promise a taste of the exotic. Every corner throws up a relic of the Byzantium or Ottoman empires and as much as modern Istanbul tries to shake it off, the flavor of the East is everywhere.

Istanbul is almost drowning from the weight of its archeological treasures. But it is so much more than just a history lesson. Its waterways, music, parks, food and people create an exhilerating piece of theatre. It is no surprise that Istanbul has been chosen as the European Capital of Culture in 2010.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Solo fisherman on the Bosphorus

USEFUL WEBSITES

Republic of Turkey	www.turkey.org
Turkish Embassy	www.turkishembassy.org
Ministry of Culture & Tourism	www.kultur.gov.tr
Official Tourist Website	www.goturkey.com
Tourist Information Office	www.tourismturkey.com
Istanbul Travel Guide	www.istanbul.com
Istanbul Hotels	www.istanbulhotels.com

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY AIR

Atatürk International Airport (IST) is the main entry point for visitors into Istanbul. The international side of the airport is clean and modern with good shopping and eating facilities. The domestic terminal is more tatty, though it has undergone some renovation.

Many international airlines have direct or connecting flights from North America to Istanbul. Turkish Airlines and Delta offer the only direct nonstop services to Turkey from the US. British Airways flies from New York to Istanbul via London. See pages 71 and 72 for details.

When landing at the airport, you should proceed to the visa office, located between the international transit route and passport control, to obtain your visa. Pay cash and check your visa is correct before leaving the visa office. You can pay in US dollars. The fee is $26 for a single-entry visa and $87 for multiple entries.

If you are catching an onward domestic flight, pass through passport control and customs, turn left and walk to the far end of the concourse where there are signs for the domestic terminal.

Security at the airport is extremely tight, as is it in major hotel chains in the city center. To take a flight from Istanbul, you will need to pass through luggage scanners to enter the airport. Further checks are made as you pass into the departure lounge and immediately before you board the plane. Your hand luggage will probably be opened and checked.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Atatürk Airport, Yesilköy, ☎ 0212-6630793, www.ataturkairport.com

Turkish Airlines, US ☎ 718-751-2600; sales enquiries in Turkey, ☎ 0212-4440849 or 0212-2521106, www.thy.com

Delta Airlines, ☎ 800-221-1212, www.delta.com

British Airways, ☎ 800-AIRWAYS, www.britishairways.com

TRAVEL TO DOWNTOWN ISTANBUL

The airport is about 25 km/15 miles from the downtown area. **Taxis** are easy to find and inexpensive. A 30-minute taxi ride into the old city of Sultanahmet costs $10-$15.

You could also take a **Hafif Metro train**, which connects the Havaliamani Station at the airport with the downtown area. Tickets cost less than a dollar. To travel to Sultanahmet Square on the Hafif, you will have to change at Zeytinburnu for the tram (see below).

The **Havaş Airport bus** (☎ 0212-4654700, www.havas.com.tr) runs between the airport and Taksim Square every 30 minutes. It takes about an hour, depending on the traffic.

MAJOR ROADS

The **E-80** highway is the main link between Europe and Istanbul. From Asia, the completion of a bypass and two toll bridges across the Bosphorus have speeded up the journey into Istanbul from the Istanbul-Izmit and Gerede-Ankara express roads.

BY BUS

Büyük Otogar is Istanbul's main bus terminal and connects it with 30 other Turkish cities, as well as Greece, Bulgaria and the Balkans. **Harem Otogar**, north of Haydarpaşa Station, connects Istanbul with Anatolian Turkey and the Middle East. Buses are air conditioned and good value.

Within Istanbul, public buses serve most of the main tourist sites and cost less than a dollar. Tickets for these buses, the IETT, must be bought at kiosks before boarding. Privately-owned buses, called **Ozel Halk Otobüsü**, take cash and charge the same fares.

BY TRAIN

There are two main stations in Istanbul: **Sirkeci Station** on the European and **Haydarpaşa Station** on the Asian side. Intercity trains connect European cities, including London and Paris, with Sirkeci Station. For travel through Turkey, trains depart from Haydarpaşa Station.

To reach Haydarpaşa Station from the European shore take a ferry from Karaköy. Sirkeci Station is a short walk or taxi ride from Eminönü ferry terminals. Intercity trains into Istanbul are slow by US standards. However, the journey is an adventure in itself. Suburban trains travel between Sirkeci Station and Halkali, through towns such as Kumkapi.

USEFUL NUMBERS	
Haydarpasa	☎ 0216-3364470
Sirkeci (international trains)	☎ 0212-5206575

BY TRAM

A modern tram runs from Zeytinburnu near the coast of the Sea of Marmara past the Aya Sofya in Sultanahmet, down to Eminönü on the shore of the Golden Horn.

A beautiful 19th-century tram runs down Istiklal Caddesi, the main shopping street between Taksim Square and Tünel Square.

A curiosity is the ***Tünel****, an underground train. It was built in the late 1800s to allow European businessmen to travel between their offices in Karaköy and their homes in Beyoglu.*

BY SEA

The overnight cruiser between Istanbul and Izmir is operational again. The service sails daily between June and September and operates in both directions every second day. It departs at 4:30pm and arrives at 9am the next day. Contact **Anker Travel**, a tour agent, for tickets, ☎ 0256-6124598, www.ankertravel.net.

For information on local ferries see *Adventures on Water* (page 137).

TRAVEL AROUND TOWN

BY TAXI & *DOLMUS*

Once in Istanbul, the roads are generally of a decent standard. The same can not be said of the drivers, who rely on their horns instead of mirrors and blinkers. Unless you are a skilled rally driver, you should consider sticking to public transport in the city.

Istanbul's street are swamped with yellow taxis, making it a convenient – if hair-raising – way of getting around. Taxis are cheap and drivers are required by law to use their meters, so make sure they do. Fares are about 25% more between midnight and 6am. Taxi drivers do not expect tips.

HISTORY

Asian Istanbul was inhabited as early as 1600BC. In the seventh century BC, Greek colonists led by **King Byzas** established Byzantium after consulting an oracle at Delphi. He was told to settle across from the "land of the blind ones." After finding the hill now occupied by Topkapi Palace, giving outstanding views of the Bosphorus and Sea of Marmara, he concluded other settlers must be blind to have missed it.

In 324AD, Emperor **Constantine the Great** made Byzantium the capital of the Roman Empire and changed the name to **Constantinople**.

There were frequent attacks on the city and in 532, during the reign of Justinian I, anti-government riots destroyed the city.

It was rebuilt, but suffered further assaults by Persians, Arabs and members of the Fourth Crusade who wanted to capture the city for its location as a trading route. Finally, the Ottoman Turks led by Sultan Mehmet II conquered Constantinople in 1453.

The city became the third and last capital of the Ottoman Empire. By the mid-1500s, Constantinople, with a population of almost half a million, was a major cultural, political, and commercial center. Ottoman rule continued until it was defeated in World War I, when the city was occupied by allied troops.

> *When the Republic of Turkey was born in 1923 after the War of Independence, Atatürk moved the capital to the city of Ankara to break from the Ottoman traditions.*

The 1980s and 1990s saw a series of political upheavals and military coups. In 1998, an earthquake killed thousands in the Marmara region and threatened to destroy Istanbul's tourism industry. The city rose again and it now has a population of 12 million and growing.

SIGHTSEEING

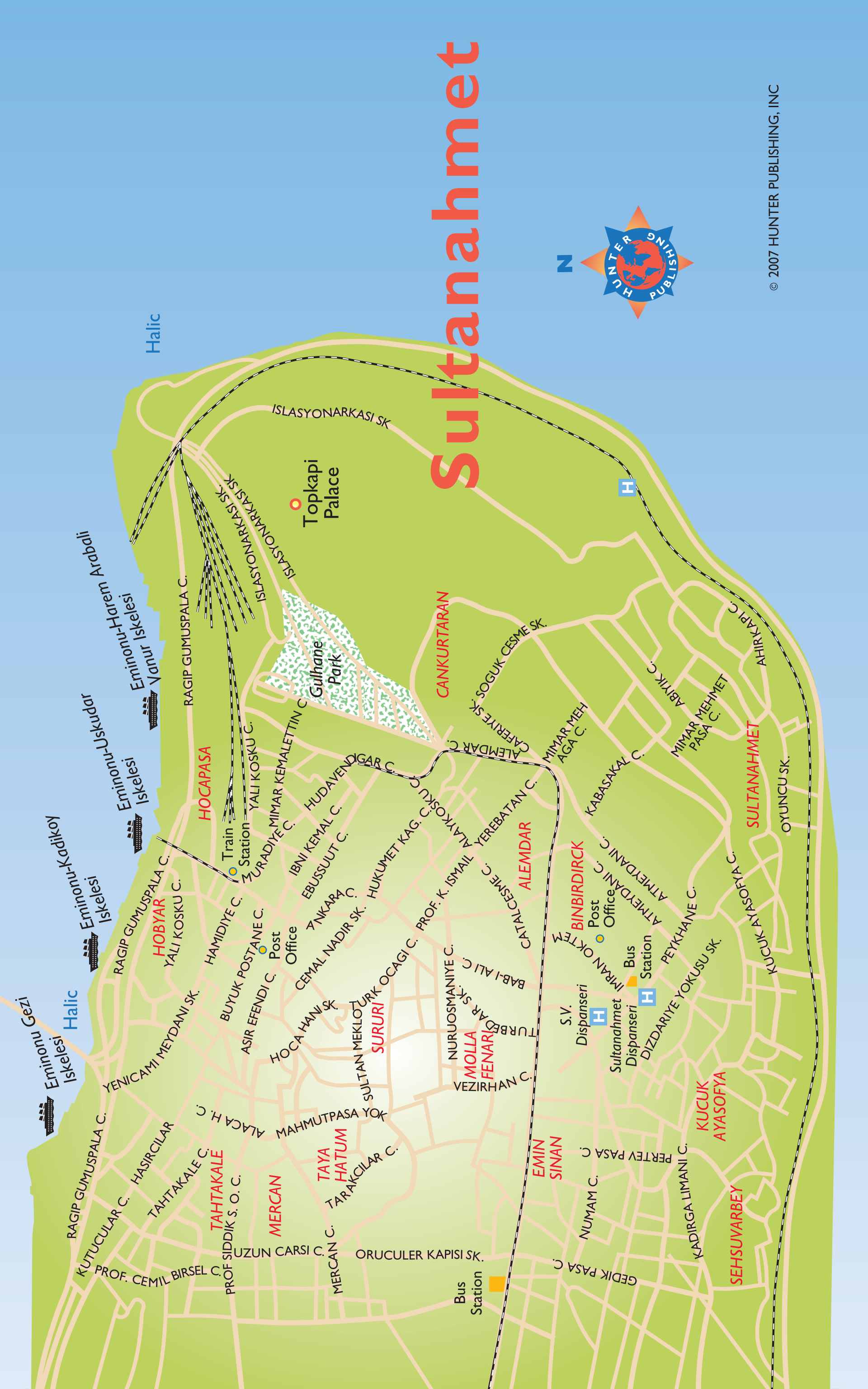
SULTANAHMET

The old city of Sultanahmet is bursting with the treasures of past empires. Mosques, churches, museums and markets are all squeezed into the district in European Istanbul that is surrounded by the Sea of Marmara and the Haliç. Sultanahmet is easy to walk around and it is possible to see all the main sites within a couple of days. However, it is so compelling that it is impossible not to be drawn back here time and again.

The best way to see Sultanahmet is to start at the arched entrance at **Aksakal Sokak** off Kennedy Caddesi, the main coastal road. The winding cobblestone streets from Aksakal Sokak take you into the main square, where the Blue Mosque and the Aya Sofya eye each from opposite ends, each bidding to be more majestic than the other.

In Roman times, the square itself was a hippodrome, where sport and festivals took place. Constantine established the square as the center of his city and chariot races took place there for centuries. The hippo-

Sultanahmet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drome could hold 100,000 spectators. The area fell into decline in the 13th century when the royal family moved out of the Grand Palace. By the 16th century, the Ibrahim Pasa Palace was built, followed a century later by the Blue Mosque, bringing wealth and glamor to the district.

Sultanahmet also has a violent past. In 1826, Sultan Mahmut II slaughtered thousands of the Janissary corps, the sultan's elite army, in the hippodrome following a revolt. Today, there are few reminders of the hippodrome. The original race track is now buried underground, and the three obelisks are the main remnants of the period. The **Egyptian Obelisk** was carved around 1450BC and stood in Thebes until it was somehow carried to Constantinople by Emperor Theodosius I in 390AD. Close by is the **Serpentine Column**, comprising three intertwined snakes carved by the ancient Greeks to commemorate their victory over the Persians. The monument was moved from Delphi by Constantine. The third obelisk is of unknown origin.

Opposite the obelisks is **Ibrahim Paşa Palace** (9am-5pm, closed Monday, entrance fee), a beautiful Ottoman building housing the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, an award-winning collection of artifacts and carpets dating as far back as the eighth century. After your tour, linger in the coffee house, set in the palace's peaceful gardens.

Across from the Aya Sofya is the **Yerebatan Saray**, the sunken palace, also known as Basilica Cistern (open daily, 9am-5pm, entrance fee). It is an underground cistern built by Constantine and expanded by Justinian in the sixth century to house the imperial water supply.

Medusa head

The cistern is 70 m/230 feet wide and 460 m/1,500 feet in length. It was filled with water from a reservoir near the Black Sea and was built to hold enough water to sustain the area during a siege.

Visitors to the cistern follow a series of walkways down to two Medusa heads mounted on columns at the far end. Classical music is piped through the chamber and artful lighting give an eerie effect. The cistern is a great attraction for children.

From the cistern, a lane on the opposite side of the road leads behind the Aya Sofya to **Soğukçeşme Sokaği**, a narrow road of painted wooden houses that were restored by the Touring Club. Halfway along is the recently opened **Istan-**

bul Library (☎ 0212-5125730), with its enormous collection of photographs and books on the city donated by Celik Gulersoy, the longtime chairman of the Touring Club. At the end of Soğukçeşme Sokaği is the entrance to Topkapi Palace.

SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (✭) are worth a visit. Two stars (✭✭) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (✭✭✭), just do it. You won't be sorry.

TOPKAPI PALACE ✭✭✭

Topkapi Palace (9am-5pm, closed Tuesday; entrance fee; ☎ 0212-5224422) sits behind the Aya Sofya on top of one of the city's fabled seven hills. Built by Mehmet II after his army stormed Constantinople in 1453, the palace served as the home of 26 sultans and their court until the mid-19th century when Dolmabahçe Palace was built.

View of Topkapi Palace from across the Bosphorus (image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

The complex is built around a series of courtyards and encompasses 173 acres of gardens, workshops, kitchens, armories, baths, fountains, halls and residential areas. The palace embodied the force of the Ottoman Empire and manifested power through the inaccessibility of the sultan and his court. Exhibits include swords and daggers, royal clothes, carpets, textiles, ceramics, manuscripts, jewels, armor and paintings.

Topkapi Palace is the city's main attraction, so get there when it opens and go straight to the Harem to buy tickets for the guided tour, which fills up early. After the Harem you can stroll around the pavilions and spacious grounds at your leisure.

Imperial Gate

To enter the first courtyard you pass through the **Imperial Gate**, also known as the Hangman's Gate because the sultan would display the remains of people executed as a deterrent to others. Once inside, there is the **Aya Irini Church**, which was once used as an ammunition depot, and behind the church is the **Ottoman mint**.

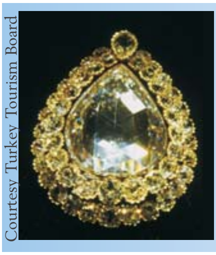
MING DYNASTY COLLECTION: The palace kitchens in the second courtyard house 12,000 pieces of porcelain, the third-largest collection in the world. There is row upon row of Ming, Qing and Yuan dynasty vases and dishes. The porcelain had a difficult journey by sea from China passing India and Ceylon before reaching the Red Sea, where they were loaded on to stronger ships and brought into Istanbul.

Opposite the kitchens, which were once catered for up to 5,000 people a day, an exhibition of silverware with Ottoman swords, vases and braziers, as well as gifts from foreign royalty such as a Russian teaset and a miniature mosque by Faberge. To the left in the Second Court is the **Armory**, displaying more than 400 weapons from the seventh century to the 20th century.

THE THIRD COURTYARD: The third courtyard was the private domain of the sultan and was entered by the Gate of Felicity, which was guarded by White Eunuchs. Even more amazing is that the sultan's throne room, where he received important guests, was watched over by deaf and mute guards.

The former kaftans of the sultans, some of them of preposterous proportions, can be seen in a room to the right as you enter the third courtyard.

The Treasury in the third courtyard has a mesmerizing collection of gems, gold and works of art. The first section contains gold and gem-studded thrones that would have been carried into battle for the sultans. The final section of is by far the most staggering, with the emerald-studded **Topkapi dagger**, made famous in the 1960s as the target of thieves in the movie *Topkapi*, and the 86-carat **Spoon Maker's Diamond**.


Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The diamond is reputed to have been found on a dump when it was still uncut and sold for three spoons. Once the foolish seller realized his mistake, a row ensued and the sultan called for the diamond to the brought to the palace, where he bought it.

The **Room of the Sacred Relics**, a former throne room in the far left-hand corner of the courtyard, houses objects of religious significance, many of which were brought back from a conquest of Egypt in the 16th century. The most important relics are the cloak and swords of the Prophet Mohammed, which are kept in a priceless box. The keys to the Ka'aba in Mecca and the first manuscripts of the Koran are also on display.

PALACE GARDENS: The gardens in the final courtyard of the palace give unrivaled views over the Bosphorus to skyscrapers in modern Istanbul and the cosmopolitan suburbs of the Asian shore. From here, you get the full impact of Istanbul's heritage as a port with the constant stream of boats chugging across the Bosphorus. The buzz is accentuated by the bleating of car horns outside the city walls below.

© Deror avi

Fountain Courtyard

> **NOTE:** *Topkapi Palace takes a day to walk around during the crowded high season, so stop for lunch at the Topkapi Palace Restaurant with its panoramic views of the Bosphorus, Sea of Marmara and Golden Horn. If that's too crowded, wait until after your palace tour to try the tea gardens in Gülhane Park outside the palace walls or the relaxed atmosphere of the terrace at the Touring Club café at the end of Sogukçesme Sokagi.*

THE HAREM: Myths and legends surround the word harem, conjuring up images of opulence and decadence, of racy parties with hundreds of concubines reclining in luxury. In fact, the word harem means "forbidden" in Arabic, which is taken to mean that the 400 or more rooms were forbidden to visitors expect the sultan.

The harem was the private apartments of the sultan's mother, legal wives, concubines and children. There would be 300-500 concubines living in the harem, mainly women brought from Eastern Europe because they were considered the most beautiful. They had either been sold into slavery or were gifts to the sultan. Once inside the harem, the women were taught about Islam, as well as culture, music, art, deportment and how to dress.

The sultan would have four official wives and as many as 10 favorite concubines. They were guarded and waited on by an army of 100 black eunuchs, slaves who were brought from Sudan. The eunuchs were trained and castrated in Egypt before being shipped to Istanbul.

The harem is an exquisitely decorated building, full of priceless cobalt blue and red Iznik tiles, stained glass windows and lacquered wood paneling. Even the doors are an extravagant mix of ebony inlaid with mother of pearl. The grandest bedrooms are those of the sultan and his mother, know as the Court of the Sultan Valide. The sultan's mother lived in

Court of Sultan Valide

apartments at the center of the harem between the sultan's rooms and those of his wives and favorite concubines in the Court of the Concubines. This gave the sultan's mother enormous power and enabled her to influence her son's decisions and control the court.

> *There was much rivalry and intrigue within the harem, with concubines and wives bidding for supremacy. Some women came to an ugly end. Sultan Ibrahim the Mad became paranoid about a plot within the harem and ordered 280 concubines to be drowned.*

Generally, concubines lived a captive, but luxurious lifestyle. Even when they were allowed to leave the harem, many women chose to stay. Every time a new sultan ascended to the throne, the harem of the former sultan was moved to one of the other palaces.

Enter the harem through the dark, cobbled passageway that served as the courtyard of the black eunuchs. Beyond the eunuchs' rooms are those of the favored concubines. Their rooms were set around a wood and timber half-courtyard. At the side of the courtyard is their former swimming pool, though it looks far from hospitable now.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Imperial Hall, in the Harem

The **Imperial Hall** is the largest and most lavish of Topkapi's rooms, which are on a smaller scale than those of the modern palaces of Dolmabahçe and Beylerbeyi. The hall was used for entertaining. The sultan would sit on his gold throne with his wives to his right and the favorites to his left.

The sultan's apartments are on the other side of the Imperial Hall. The walls are covered with Iznik tiles, except for the carved shelves where the sultan kept his turbans and books.

The sultan's *hamam* is a series of marble and alabaster bathing chambers, each hotter than the previous one. Islam puts a big emphasis on washing and the sultan would be scrubbed and massaged here, often before selecting his concubine. Rather than being a den of spontaneous fornication, the sultan would pick a concubine for the evening and after she had been informed by the Chief Eunuch, she would be bathed, perfumed, dressed and sent a gift. The sultan would then go to her chamber, as few women were allowed inside his private rooms. The date would be recorded in case the concubine became pregnant. If she gave birth to a boy, her status would be elevated to Haseki Sultan.

At the end of the harem is the **Golden Passageway**, where concubines would line up when the sultan passed through. Generous sultans would throw gold coins on to the floor, giving the passageway its name.

Golden Passageway

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM: Located in the first courtyard of Topkapi Palace, the museum houses an impressive scale replica of the façade of the Temple to Athena from Assos. There is a sarcophagus said to have contained the remains of Alexander the Great and a stone tablet carved with the Treaty of Kadesh, the first peace treaty, which was signed between the Hittite King Hattusilis III and the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II.(Osman Hamdi Bey Yokusu, Gülhane, ☎ 0212-5207740, Tuesday to Sunday 9am-5:30pm)

View of the Bosphorus, seen from Topkapi Palace

AYA SOFYA (HAGIA SOPHIA) ★★★

The pink-red stone Aya Sofya (☎ 0212-5221750, 9am-4pm, closed Monday, entrance fee) is one of the most awe-inspiring sights in the world. The domes and minarets of Aya Sofya, like those of the Blue Mosque, can be seen for miles across the Istanbul skyline.

Originally built as a church in 360AD by Roman Emperor Constantius, son of Constantine, Aya Sofya twice burned down before being rebuilt in the sixth century by Emperor Justinian. Mehmet the Conqueror declared the church a mosque in 1453 and it became a museum during Atatürk's Republican era in 1935.

Giant dome of the Aya Sofya

Aya Sofya is considered an architectural masterpiece with its 55-m/180-foot-high dome that defies the laws of physics. Pillars have since been added to the dome in case of earthquakes.

Exquisite mosaics adorn the interior. However, many of them are difficult to see because of the delapidated state of the building and the dim light. Scaffolding reaching into the immense dome is for much-needed repairs, but it does spoil the mood.

The best-preserved mosaics are in the gallery, which is reached by a steep, narrow passageway, formerly the women's entrance into the mosque. Look out for the 10th-century mosaic of Madonna and Child with Justinian on one side and Constantine on the other.

> **NOTE:** *The best way to capture the enormity and splendor of the Aya Sofya and Blue Mosque is from the pretty gardens between the two. At night, you can watch the sun set behind both buildings from the rooftop bars at The Four Seasons Hotel and The Seven Hills Hotel.*

Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

Blue mosque

THE BLUE MOSQUE ✩✩

The Blue Mosque (open from before dawn prayers until evening prayers) was built between 1609 and 1616 by architect Sedefkar Mehmet Aga to rival the Aya Sofya and show the superiority of Islam. It is the only mosque in the city with six minarets.

The mosque is more formerly called the Sultan Ahmet Camii, but became known as the Blue Mosque because of the hand-painted blue and white Iznik tiles that adorn the interior walls. Shafts of sunlight pour through the 260 stained-glass windows, highlighting the tiles.

Opposite: Aya Sofya (image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board)

You must enter the mosque through the north gate near to the obelisks. Inside is a vast space whose only furnishings are kilims laid out for prayers, giant glass lanterns and the raised chair of the imam. The atmosphere is enchanting, particularly if you are lucky enough to visit during a prayer service. It is a peaceful escape from the hustle of Sultanahmet.

> **NOTE:** *Visitors should respect that the Blue Mosque is a religious building. Dress modestly. Remove your shoes and leave them outside the mosque. Women should cover their heads.*

CALLIGRAPHY MUSEUM

The former Beyazit Medresesi, a religious school, was transformed into a museum explaining the culture behind the dying art of calligraphy. The museum, the only one of its kind in the world, has examples of calligraphy, Imperial seals and tools used for calligraphy. (Beyazit Square, ☎ 0212-5275851, 9am-5pm Monday to Friday, entrance fee)

THE GRAND BAZAAR ✪✪

Istanbul has been at the center of trade between Europe and Asia for thousands of years and it is no surprise that the thrill of buying and selling still attracts thousands of people to the city.

© Gryffindor

Main aisle, Grand Bazaar

The most furious haggling takes place among the reputed 4,000 stalls that line the dark, stone-arched streets of the Kapali Çarşi, or Grand Bazaar. Everything you can imagine is for sale here: gold and silver; emeralds and rubies; leather bags and jackets; carpets; brassware; smoking pipes; carved wooden boxes; pottery; lamps; bridal gowns and fake CDs, perfume and Levis.

The market (closed on Sunday) is west from the main square in Sultanahmet. You can take the tram or enjoy the walk. Follow Divan Yolu, the road lined with tourist restaurants and shops, and turn tight into Vesirhani Caddesi. Cross the square at the Nurousmaniye Mosque and go on to the main street of the market, Kalpakcilarbasi Caddesi. It is easy get lost in the Grand Bazaar, so use this street as a marker.

> **CAUTION:** Sultanahmet is packed with tourists in summer. That attracts opportunistic locals who want to cash-in by acting as tour guides or lure you into one of the many leather shops in the district. While most Turks are friendly, practice common sense and stick to official guides.

The stalls are grouped together, as was the tradition centuries ago, so all the leather sellers are in one section, mainly the Furrier's Market, and the jewelry shops are around Kalpakcilarbasi Caddesi. This helps when buying items because you can easily compare prices. The stalls cater as much to locals as tourists, but be wary of the quality, particularly of jewelry and leather. Prices are often massively inflated because buyers are expected to bargain hard. Cut the prices by at least half on anything you bargain for. Then walk away. If the stall owners want your custom they will quickly drop the price.

The constant baiting by stall owners can make it difficult to wander around, but don't let that stop you from enjoying this market, which has stood since the mid-1400s and survived two earthquakes. There

Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

Packed stalls in the Grand Bazaar

are always plenty of cafés where you can stop for a drink or a *meze* (the Turkish version of *tapas*). For a less frantic market selling kilims and pottery, try the Arasta Bazaar, next to the Blue Mosque.

THE GOLDEN HORN

The Golden Horn, or Haliç, is an inlet dividing in two the European side of Istanbul. Once the playground of sultans, the banks of the Haliç were lined with villas and gardens full of cypress and plane (sycamore) trees. The area has been home to European immigrants starting with the Genoese in the 14th century. Jewish, Armenian and Greek immigrants have all resided along the narrow tangle of streets.

Progress brought with it industrial pollution from factories and warehouses and the area sank into decline with the once-golden waters of the inlet becoming filthy. Recently, efforts have been made to clean up the water and it is once again attracting travelers and locals who want to take a trip down it – either by taxi to see the mosques, markets and museums or by ferry to take in the views.

An essential stop is the **Church of St. Saviour** in Chora (also known as the Kariye Museum) just inside Edirne Gate (Kariye Camii Sokak 26, ☎ 0212-6319241, 9am-5pm, closed Wednesday, entrance fee). The church has more than 100 of the best Byzantine frescoes in the world depicting biblical scenes from the Annunciation to the Last Judgement. A taxi to the church will cost about $5, or you can take a bus for Edirnekapi and get off beside the Vefa Stadium.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Halfway up the Haliç are the neighborhoods of **Fener** and **Balat** with their colorful houses, churches and synagogues. Fener was almost exclusively Greek until the population exchange in 1923. It was a respectable and aspirational neighborhood, home to merchants and aristocrats. The residents built many schools, including the striking Fener Greek High School, a red-brick building that has become the symbol of Fener. Nearby, is the austere grey-stone Church of St. Stephen of the Bulgars. The Bulgarian Orthodox church was built entirely of cast iron and prefabricated in Vienna before being shipped to Istanbul and assembled on the banks of the Haliç.

The left bank of the Haliç was known for its traditional taverns, called *meyhane*, lively music halls and restaurants. Most had disappeared by the 1970s, but there is now a revival with a few new *meyhanes* opened in the past couple of years.

The Armenian neighborhood of **Kumkapi** is worth visiting for meyhanes and its fish restaurants playing gypsy music. There are some Armenian and Greek churches in Kumkapi, though few Greeks still live in the area.

THE SULTAN'S BOATS

Another Istanbul tradition that had, until recently, been lost were the Sultan's Boats, known as Sultan's Kayiklari. They were used to transport rulers along the waterways, but were abandoned after several assassination attempts against Sultan Abdulhamid. Replicas of the red and gold boats now tour the Haliç at 6:30pm on weekdays, with an additional tour at 1:30pm at weekends. The Bosphorus tour starts at 7:30pm on weekdays, with a second tour at 1:30pm on weekends. Tours last between 45 minutes and one hour. For reservations, ☎ 0212-2965240, www.sultankayiklari.com.

EYUP CAMII

Istanbul is packed with beautiful mosques and it would be impossible to spend a whole vacation trying to visit them all. With so many other adventures to have, the three must-see mosques are the Blue Mosque, which is the most beautiful, Süleymaniye Camii, the second-largest, and Eyup Camii, the most holy.

Eyup Camii lies outside the city walls at the end of the Haliç. It is a 15-minute bus ride or more pleasant ferry ride from Eminönü. Eyup was the first mosque built after the Ottoman conquest of the city and it attracts many pilgrims. The interior of the mosque is magnificent, with gold leafed decorations and chandeliers hanging from the dome. Ebu Eyyub Ensari, the standard bearer of the Prophet Mohammed, died here during the Islamic assault on Constantinople in 670AD. Eyup's elaborate tomb sits alongside those of prime ministers, sultans and other political figures in the graveyard.

> *Eyup Camii is the fourth holiest in Islam after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Many pilgrims visit the tomb in search of a miracle. The district is one of the most religious in Istanbul and visitors should be respectful. Avoid going there on Friday, when it is full of worshippers.*

Above the mosque on a hill overlooking the Haliç is the **Pierre Loti Café**, made famous by the Turkophile French writer in the 1800s. It has been a draw for bohemian, and religious, spirits for decades. Luckily, there is now a cable car to whisk visitors up the hill in a couple of minutes rather than the 20 minutes it takes by taxi.

EMINÖNÜ

Back at the entrance to the Haliç in the district of Eminönü is the **Süleymaniye Camii**. The mosque's domes sit piled on top of one another like meringues, towering above the spice market and the maze of streets in Eminönü. The mosque was designed by Mimar Sinan, the most renowned architect of the Ottoman era. It took 3,523 workmen seven years to build and was completed in 1557. The central dome is almost 50 m/170 feet high and 27 m/88 feet in diameter.

The mosque complex has schools, a Turkish bath and a kitchen and hospice for the poor. Do not miss the elaborate tombs of Süleyman the Magnificent and his Hurrem Sultan, Roxelana, in the garden behind the mosque (entrance fee). Sinan himself also has a more modest tomb in the

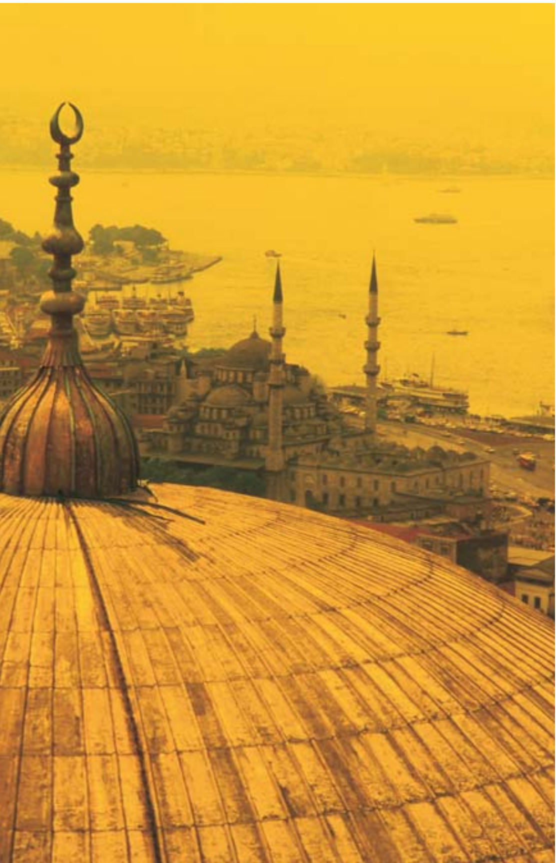


Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

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Spice market (© Baloncici/Dreamstime.com)

grounds. At night, the minarets of the mosque are framed in a silhouette.

The **Egyptian Bazaar**, also known as the Spice Bazaar, is down the steep hill from the Süleymaniye Camii, close to the ferry terminals. It stands in a large square that has been overtaken by pigeons. The market has a mind-blowing array of brightly colored herbs and spices, including Turkish Viagra, as well as dates, figs, nuts, Turkish delight and fish. The stall owners are more relaxed than those in the Grand Bazaar and you can enjoy munching your way around. The market is always bursting with customers and the crush can be frightening, particularly when goods are moved along the narrow alleys in oversized wheelbarrows.

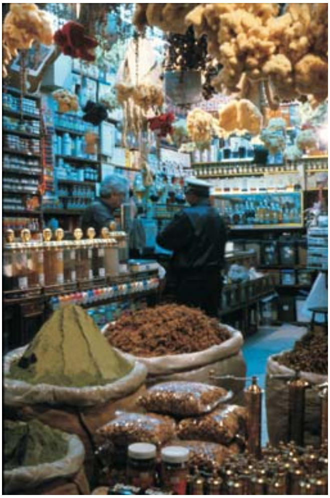


Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

Behind the Egyptian Bazaar, on a hill leading up to the Süleymaniye Camii, are alleyways with stores selling clothes and kebabs at rock-bottom prices. Farther along are stalls crammed with toys, many of them catering to children with a sense of humor. Bellydancing dolls and meowing furry cats in baskets are among the more bizarre.

GALATA

Across the Galata Bridge, lined with hopeful fishermen, lies the area loosely termed Modern Istanbul, even though most of the buildings between Karaköy and Pera are over a century old. The first neighborhood is Karaköy, also known as Galata. It is a bustling and slightly grubby district where fishing trawlers compete for space along the Bosphorus with cruise liners, and banks sit alongside rundown houses. A strange sight is the tendency to have whole streets devoted to selling a particular item, whether it is bicycles or lamps.

The main site in Karaköy is **Galata Tower** (9am-late), a former prison and Ottoman military base that has risen above the cramped buildings since 1348. It now attracts tourists to its revolving restaurant and shops. You can pay to go on to a very narrow balcony to get unobstructed views of the city, but it is not recommended for the faint-hearted.

BEYOGLU TO TAKSIM SQUARE

BEYOGLU

In the 19th century, Beyoğlu was a glamorous place to live and work. It was full of foreign diplomats and wealthy merchants, whose mansions still line the Bosphorus and stretch up the hill into the area known as Pera. The Grand Rue de Pera rivaled Paris with its exclusive boutiques, restaurants and parties galore. It was renamed Istiklal Caddesi at the start of the Republican era and fell into a shabby, bohemian state. Diplomats were replaced by artists, particularly in Asmalimescit, and you can spend an afternoon wandering around the many artists' studios.

The district has enjoyed a cultural and architectural revival with boutiques, cafés and nightclubs opening around **Istiklal Caddesi**. Luckily, the bookstores and movie theaters have not been pushed out. At night, it seems the whole of Istanbul is strolling down this pedestrian street and the beat of the city is contained here.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

Tram running along Istikal Caddesi

To the right of Istiklal Caddesi is the **Cicek Pasaji**, or Flower Passage, a covered courtyard that retains its original buzzing atmosphere. Turks and tourists alike meet here over drinks and *mezes* to watch the world go by. Plan to eat late, when the locals go to dinner.

Another must-see venue is the nearby **Pera Palas Hotel** (Meşrutiyet Caddesi 98-100, Tepebasi, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2514560, www.perapalas.com) built to accommodate guests from the Orient Express, which traveled to Istanbul from Paris. Guests were transported from the train to the hotel in Sedan chairs. The hotel's prestigious guest list also included Jackie Kennedy Onassis and Atatürk. The founder of the Turkish Republic's room, number 101, is preserved as a museum.

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S DISAPPEARANCE

The Pera Palas has a controversial past with its claim to have solved the mystery of the disappearance of Agatha Christie. The author vanished from her home in England for 11 days in 1926 after her husband told her he wanted a divorce. Her disappearance and the discovery of her car miles away from her home in northern England sparked a nationwide police and media hunt. Some even began to suspect foul play on the part of her husband.

Christie was eventually found in a hotel in Yorkshire, England, and claimed to have suffered from amnesia. Some suspected it was revenge on her husband and others believe it was a well-executed publicity stunt. The Pera Palas Hotel has another explanation. It claims Christie spent her missing days there in room 411, where she planned the novel *Murder on the Orient Express.* You can ask to see the room and make up your own mind about one of Christie's most enduring tales.

Along the same street is the **Pera Museum** (Meşrutiyet Caddesi 141, Tepebasi, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-3349900, Tuesday to Saturday 10am-7pm, and Sunday 12pm-7pm, entrance fee). The museum has a collection of oriental paintings alongside tiles and ceramics from Kütahya. There are also temporary exhibitions of world art and photography.

TAKSIM SQUARE

Traveling farther north brings you to Taksim Square, the end of Istaklal Caddesi and the start of the main financial and conference district. The square itself is unspectacular, but there are several interesting buildings around it, including the **Atatürk Cultural Centre and the Military Museum** (Valikonagi Caddesi 3, Haribye, ☎ 0212-2332720, closed on Monday and Thursday, open 9am-5pm the rest of the week, entrance fee). The Military Museum has about 10,000 weapons and armors from the Turkish and foreign militaries. Even if you are not particularly interested in military exhibitions, go for the Ottoman band, which plays at 3pm and 4pm when the museum is open.

If you are a fan of military museums, plan to visit the **Naval Museum**, next to the ferry terminal in Beşiktaş (☎ 0212-3274346, Wednesday to Sunday 9am-12:30, 1:30-5pm, entrance fee). The museum has wonderful miniature wooden ships and real steam engines and cannons. The museum is smaller and will be more enjoyable for younger children.

Cross the road from the Naval Museum to Ortabahçe Caddesi, a long road leading through a shopping area to **Ihlamur Royal Lodge** ★★. **Ihlamur Kasirlari** (Ihlamur Yolu, ☎ 0212-2588903, closed on Monday and Thursday, open 9:30am-5pm other days, entrance fee) was designed as a smaller version of nearby Dolmabahçe Palace between 1849-1855. It was used as a summer residence. There are actually two lodges: the living quarters, or harem, and the official lodge where visitors would be received. The lodge is decorated with a mixture of Turkish rugs, French furniture and English porcelain. In summer, Ihlamur runs painting and drama class for children.

Nearby, is the **Yildiz Palace Museum** (Barbaros Bulvari, open 9am-5pm, closed Monday, entrance fee), which houses a good collection of porcelain commissioned by Sultan Abdulhamit.

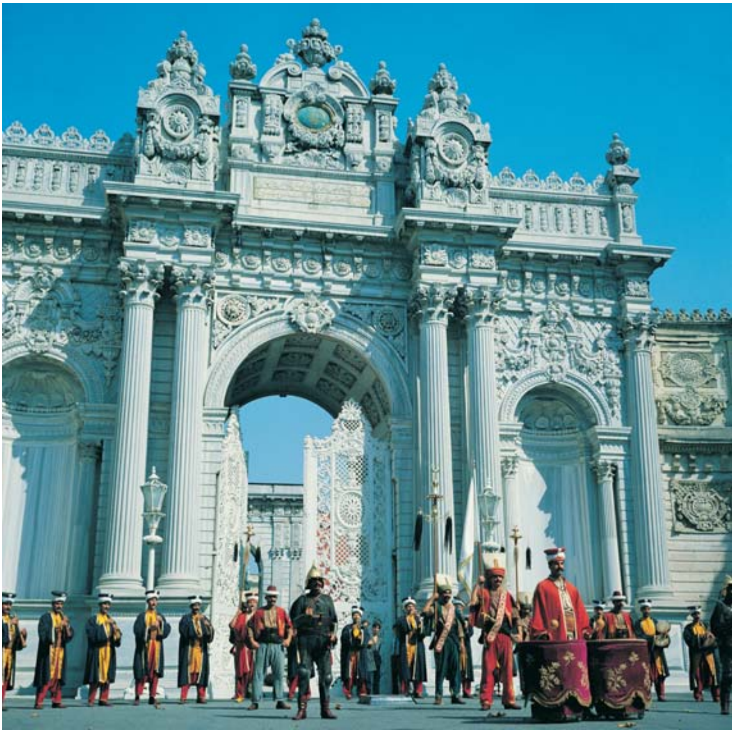


Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

Guards in ceremonial dress at Dolmabahce Palace

On the banks of the Bosphorus in Beşiktaş is **Dolmabahçe Palace** (open 9am-4pm, closed Monday and Thursday, entrance fee, ☎ 0212-2369000, www.millisaraylar.gov.tr), a decadent imperial palace built on the orders of Sultan Abdul Mecit as a replacement for Topkapi Palace when Beyoğlu became increasingly influential. Dolmabahçe Palace was completed in 1856 and was home to the last six sultans.

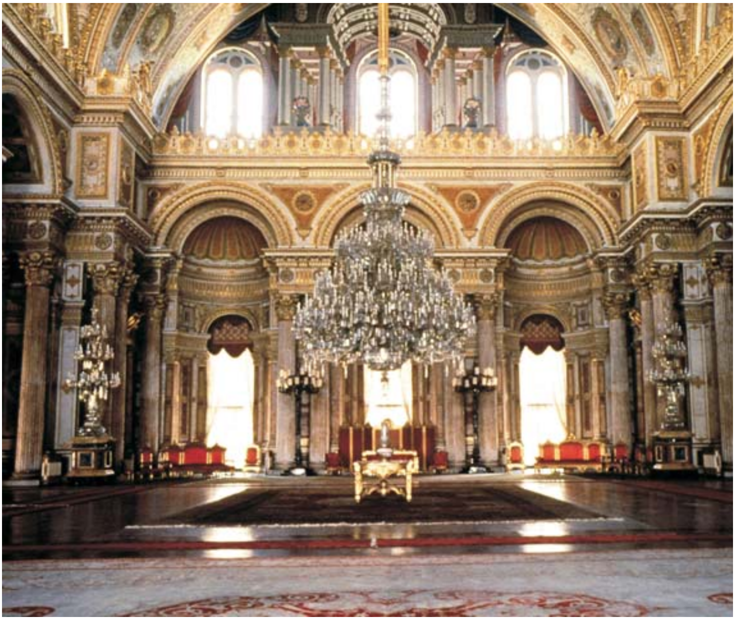


Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

The palace's 285 rooms, six Turkish baths and 68 toilets take about an hour to explore by guided tour. It is worth it just to see the 4½-ton Bohemian crystal chandelier (above), the world's largest, as well as the Baroque and Roccoco décor and crystal staircases. The former food stores house an impressive collection of china and gold dinner services from across Europe.

Atatürk died at Dolmabahçe Palace in November 1938 after he became sick during a visit to the city. His study and modest room, with its wooden bed decorated with gold-crossed swords, have been preserved. Note the time on the clock in the room. It says 9:05am, the time Atatürk died.

ALONG THE BOSPHORUS

Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

Ortaköy Mosque on the Bosphorus

North of Dolmabahçe, escape into the neighborhoods between the Bosphorus and Fatih Sultan Mehmet bridges for a continental European atmosphere of cafés and boutiques. **Ortaköy**, a leisurely walk from Dolmabahçe Palace, is a bohemian village set below the Bosphorus Bridge. There is a good outdoor market selling jewelry, pashminas and antiques along the cobbled lanes. You can walk along the waterfront to Kolej, Kuruçeşme and Bebek, with its smart cafés and whitewashed wooden mansions standing in front of fishing boats and yachts moored on the Bosphorus. The area is popular with wealthy foreigners living in the city.

Café culture in Ortaköy (© Samantha Lafferty)

Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

The expansive Rumeli Fortress

Rumeli Hisari, the Rumeli Fortress, was built by Mehmet the Conqueror in four months in 1452 to cut off aid via the Black Sea to beleaguered Constantinople as he prepared his final onslaught of the city. The castle is now a museum (open 9am-5pm, closed Wednesday; entrance fee) and hosts pop concerts in the summer.

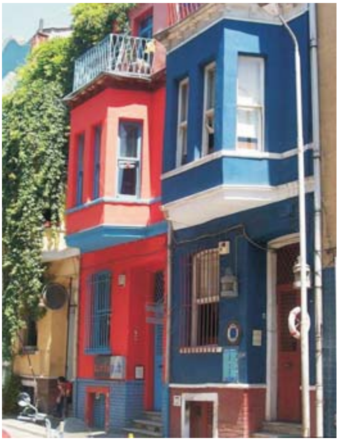
ASIAN ISTANBUL

Asian Istanbul is a huge contrast to the the tourist hub of Sultanahmet and the bustle of Taksim on the European shores of the city. The spacious green parks, brightly painted wooden houses and a relaxed pace of life are more in keeping with the districts of Bebek and Tarabya. Parts of the Asian shore appear more European than those on the opposite side of the Bosphorus.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Kadiköy is a lively town flooded with boutiques, markets and cafés that are popular with wealthy locals. The waterfront area is busy in the evenings, especially around the marinas and yacht clubs. The town center is a conservation area where cars are banned, making it a great place to wander around.

Since the mid-15th century Kadiköy has turned from a Greek fishing village into a melting pot of Turks, Armenians and Jews. The many restaurants and shops benefit from the mix of cultures with Armenian bakeries alongside Turkish confectioners.



© Istanbul

Brightly painted houses, Kadiköy

The fashionable district of **Moda** in Kadiköy was first settled by Jewish and Armenian communities in the 18th and 19th centuries. The town's wooden houses have been replaced by apartment blocks, but the affluent atmosphere has not been lost. Moda sits on the water's edge and has a beach with the obligatory beach clubs and watersports.

Past Kadiköy is **Fenerbahçe**, one of the swankiest districts in Istanbul, with an abundance of restaurants and boutiques. It is also home to some of the footballers who play for Fenerbahçe Sports Club. Beyond Fenerbahçe is Bağdat Caddesi, a wide Parisian-style boulevard crammed with designer stores and cafés. The avenue is the main thoroughfare through the Asian side.

© QuartierLatin1968

Üsküdar is one of the city's lesser-known districts. It offers an authentic, if conservative, view of life. The town is quieter than some of its neighbors along the Bosphorus, and beautiful mosques dot its main tree-lined square.

The Iskele, or Mihrimah Camii, is opposite the main ferry pier on a high platform with a large covered porch in front. Opposite this is **Yeni Valide Camii**, built in 1710 by Sultan Ahmet III for his mother who is buried in a green tomb that looks like a giant birdcage. In the nearby suburb of Tabakla is the **Çinili Camii**, which takes its name from the Iznik tiles inside.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

The Florence Nightingale Museum in the Selimiye Barracks on the waterside in Üsküdar is a tribute to the lady with the lamp. During the Crimean War the barracks were allocated to the British soldiers and their wives. Florence Nightingale was among them, and she nursed wounded soldiers from the room that now serves as a museum.

Üsküdar also has lots of good restaurants and cafés along the waterfront, with views of the Bosphorus and the rest of the city. For the most inspiring city skyline, travel east from Üsküdar and climb up the **Camlica Hills**. The park has lost its grand summerhouses and is somewhat down-at-heel, but it still offers unparalleled views from the Asian side.

BEYLERBEYI PALACE

Beylerbeyi Palace (open 9:30am-5pm, closed Monday and Thursday; entrance fee) is in front of the Camlica Hills, just past the Bosphorus Bridge. To reach the palace from the European shore, take a ferry from Eminönü to Üsküdar and then a *dolmus* to Beylerbeyi.

The 26-bedroom palace was built by Sultan Mahmud II between 1861 and 1865 and was partially destroyed in a fire. It was restored by Sultan

Beylerbeyi Palace (image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board)

Abdülaziz to be ornate and extravagant, with a fountain in the ballroom and Baroque ceilings and colored crystal chandeliers throughout. Take a couple of hours to explore the palace's two sections: the *selamlik*, where men would gather for official business, and the harem.

The surrounding district of Beylerbeyi is attractive and features narrow streets leading to the seaside where good seafood restaurants can be found. Traveling north along the Bosphorus you will come to the sleepy village of **Kanlica**, famous for its delicious yogurt, which is served with a spoonful of sugar. Kanlica has retained its traditional Asian charms, with quiet old streets lined with atmospheric cafés.

EXCURSIONS FROM ISTANBUL

THE PRINCES' ISLANDS

In the searing heat of summer when the packed metropolis is dusty and unbearable, head south of the city by ferry to a group of islands in the Sea of Marmara called the Princes' Islands.

The islands earned their name because they were the place of exile for disgraced princes during the Byzantine era. It must have been a tranquil existence because until the last century the islands were sparsely inhabited and rarely visited. Life for the princes was far easier than in prisons on the Turkish mainland.

The islands are now fashionable resorts where upmarket locals go to sunbathe and picnic. The surrounding waters are suitable for swimming, but not the country's cleanest. On the upside, there are smart pavilions and well-arranged gardens with an array of acacia, redbud, oleander, jasmine, honeysuckle and carnations.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

The Princes' Islands have some upscale pavilions

Cars and motorcycles are banned here; the only way to travel around is by bicycle, donkey or horse-drawn carriage. It is a wonderful way to explore.

Only four of the nine islands can be visited: Kinaliada; Burgazada; Heybeliada and Büyükada. All are busy at weekends in the summer and are much more pleasant in spring and autumn or even midweek during the summer. Remember to book a hotel room in advance if you want to stay the night.

Kinaliada, also known as Henna Island because of its red cliffs, has a lovely pebble beach perfect for sun worshipers. It is the most developed of the islands and the busiest because of its proximity to the mainland. You can visit the ruins of Hristos monastery, the only one of three monasteries once here that is still standing.

The second of the islands is **Burgazada**, a mountainous land with good footpaths to tempt hikers. There are also plenty of watersports activities to try after you have hiked through pine forests to reach the beach.

Heybeliada is the second-largest of the islands and it is where the Turkish naval academy is based. The island was exploited in the 19th century when a rich copper mine was found. The mine was later closed down and was left as a glorious retreat with wooden mansions and forests.

The largest of the Princes Islands is **Büyükada**, where elaborate villas stand alongside excellent seafood restaurants and hotels. The ferry arrives at an art nouveau pier where you can start a tour by horse-drawn carriage. A visit to the Monastery of St. George is recommended for energetic walkers who can climb the 200-m/650-foot-hill. Also, Hotel Splendid, like the Pera Palas, is a tourist attraction in itself, a remnant of bygone days of luxury.

SILE & AGVA

Şile (70 km/43 miles from Istanbul) has long sandy beaches, overlooked by the remains of a Genoese Castle. The town sits on a cliff next to a black-and-white striped lighthouse. Visitors can idle away time in one of the restaurants overlooking the sea. To reach Şile by car, follow the Umraniye-Şile highway through Üsküdar northeast towards the Black Sea coast.

Ağva, 100 km/62 miles from Istanbul on the banks of a river, is surrounded by forests and parks, making it ideal for a camping holiday. Kerpe, Kefken and Karasu are three quaint fishing villages east of Ağva. Ağva receives a constant stream of visitors who are attracted by its good restaurants and clear water. To visit Ağva, follow the directions for Şile; Ağva is about 30 km/19 miles farther along the coast road.

CHILDREN'S ISTANBUL

Istanbul may seems like an adult's city, but there is plenty to entertain children too.

Akademi, Bahçeli Hamam Sokak 3, Beyoğlu (☎ 0212-2517484), is a center run by professional childminders specializing in arts and music.

Bosphorus Zoo, Bird Paradise & Botanic Park (Boğazici Hayvanat Bahçesi) in Bayramoglu, Darica, (☎ 0262-6531374) is a 70-hectare/173-acre zoo with penguins, kangaroos, zebras, birds and a wonderful botanic garden.

Tatilya, E-5 Highway Beylikduzu (☎ 0212-8520505), is Istantul's answer to Disneyland. This huge indoor arena has rollercoasters, cinema, themed play areas and a lake.

Miniaturk is located in a complex at Sutluce on the banks of Haliç. There is a large Trojan Horse for children to climb on and slide down. Other attractions include ship and castle models and an electric mini train. Entrance fee.

The Toy Museum, Omerpasa Caddesi Dr. Zeki Zeren Sokak 17, Goztepe (☎ 0216-3594550, www.oyuncakmuzesi.com; open everyday except Monday 9:30am-7pm). The museum was started by Turkish writer Sunay Akin in a pavilion belonging to his family. It has toys from all over the world displayed in elaborate stage designs. Among the museum's oldest items are a violin produced in France in 1810 and a doll made in the US in 1820. Entrance fee.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

SOCCER

Soccer in Turkey has the same importance as life and death. On match days, several hundred-thousand men fill stadiums wearing replica soccer shirts and waving the flags of their teams. Supporters are fervent and the atmosphere inside the ground is dramatic. Crowds support victories into the night, chanting, hooting car horns and letting off flares.

A soccer match is a noisy and colorful event that gives almost as much of an insight into Turkish culture as a visit to a mosque or a street market. Unfortunately, crowd trouble is frequent and riot police are usually waiting outside grounds.

Istanbul has three soccer teams: Fenerbahçe (www.fenerbahce.org.tr), Besiktas (www.bjk1903.com) and Galatasaray (www.galatasaray.org). Galatasaray was the first team in the country, formed by students at the town's high school before the turn of the 20th century.

Match tickets can be bought through ticketing firm **Biletix's** website and call center (☎ 0216-4541555, www.biletix.com.tr) or through Biletix outlets throughout Turkey. You can also purchase tickets from stadiums on match day.

FORMULA ONE

The roar of racing cars flying around a track brings excitement and glamor to the 19 cities that feature on the Formula One map. Turkey made its debut on the Formula One (www.formula1-istanbul.com) calendar in 2005 with a new purpose-built circuit. The **Istanbul Racing Circuit** is on the Asian side of the city, about 90 km/56 miles from the downtown area. Spectator facilities are impressive, with seating capacity for 130,000. Two seven-floor VIP towers at either end of the paddock can seat 5,000 people.

You can buy tickets for one day or the full three days, which includes testing, qualifying and race day. Tickets cost between $14 and $390.

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON WHEELS

DRIVING TOURS

Driving in Istanbul is no fun unless you have a local to chauffeur you around. Istanbul-based **Adventure Tours** (☎ 0212-5208720, www.adventuretours.com.tr) has a one-day driving tour of the city's Asian shores and a more interesting day-long excursion to the Polish village of Polenez, also known as Adampol. This Polish farm colony lies northeast of the Rumeli Hisari, the fortress that guards the Bosphorus. Polish travelers moved to the area after escaping the Russians in their homeland. The village has been inhabited by Poles for at least 150 years and the dwindling population still speaks Polish. Some Armenians and Slavs have also moved here. After visiting the village, the driving tour then continues northeast to Ağva on the Black Sea coast. Both driving tours cost $75.

CYCLING TOURS

Exploring Istanbul on two wheels may seem crazy. But it is possible to wheel it through some of the best districts without losing any limbs. These itineraries offer spectacular views:

- The first route starts at Beşiktaş and passes the Çirağan Sarayi (a palace-turned-hotel) before leading into the bohemian town of Ortaköy, where the Bosphorus Bridge looms above. At the Rumeli Hisar, the road goes underneath Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge before stretching out into the Strait's greener towns. The 22-km/14-mile route finishes at Rumeli Feneri, the last village on the European side at the end of the Bosphorus.

Rumeli Feneri was named after the lighthouse that was built by the French during the Crimean War.

- The second route leaves **Rumeli Feneri** and heads inland across some steep hills until it reaches the village of Kumköy on the Black Sea coast. From here, the road runs down to the beaches at Kilyos. This is a short, but challenging ride.
- **Belgrade Forest**, near Sariyer, is the largest forest in the region. It is a rugged landscape full of asphalt and dirt biking trails running up to the Black Sea coast.
- **Polonezköy Forest** offers 60 km/37 miles of off-road cycling trails through hilly, wooded terrain. From the center of the village you can opt for any of the trails leading into the forest. They are suitable for novice and more advanced riders.

- For a scenic ride, start at **Komurluk** village northeast of Omerli Baraji (dam). Follow the road up to Yeşilvadi on a mixture of paved and dirt roads as you head through the mountains to the finishing point of Şile on the Black Sea coast.

Bike Hire

Bike hire is available in some cities. However, hiring good off-road bikes can be difficult. You can take your own – transported free of charge on most flights – or buy one in Turkey.

Yeşil Bisiklet (☎ 216-3635836, www.yesilbisiklet.com) sells Trek, Scott USA and other top brands. The store also has bikes for hire at $16 a day. Alternately, if you plan a long trip, you can buy a bike and sell it back to the store when you return to Istanbul. Gürsel Akay is very knowledgeable about biking trails and can offer advice and maps. He also organizes a free long-distance bike tour through Turkey every year.

Bike Turkey (☎ 216-3691006) is another quality bike store that also offers technical expertise and servicing.

MOTORBIKE TOURS

GlobeRiders, a Seattle-based motorbike tour agency, is running an overland trip along the Silk Road from Istanbul to Xian in China. The 53-day trip covers 12,800 km/8,000 miles and crosses through Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and into China via the Korgas Pass. The trip ends in the eastern city of the Terracotta Warriors.

Participants must ride their own dual-purpose bike with a portable GPS. They should be experienced, able to handle rough terrain and crowded cities. This a serious once-in-a-lifetime tour costing $19,950. The price includes the shipment of your bike between Seattle and Istanbul and from Xian back to Seattle. Accommodation, meals, customs and documentation fees, a chase vehicle and guide are also included.

GlobeRiders was set up by Helge Pedersen, a journeyman biker who has spent the past decade riding through 77 countries on his BMW R80GS. Pedersen has chronicled his trips in his book *10 Years on 2 Wheels*. www.globeriders.com

Sailing on the Bosphorus (© Mario Savoia/Dreamstime.com)

ADVENTURES ON WATER

SAILING ON THE BOSPHORUS

Every great city has an immense waterway snaking through its heart. Istanbul has the Bosphorus, a romantic stretch of water connecting the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea. About 50,000 ships sail down the Bosphorus each year, whether to fish, transport oil and other goods, or for pleasure. It is one of the world's busiest waterways.

Sailing down the Bosphorus is the best way to get a feel for Istanbul's size and diversity, and a trip here would not be complete without a cruise. You can pass under the enormous bridges spanning Europe and Asia, see palaces and fortresses and explore Istanbul's vibrant towns.

The two largest quays, Eminönü and Karaköy, are on opposite sides of The Haliç and are linked by the Galata Bridge. Karaköy acts as a dock for luxury cruise ships headed for the Aegean and Mediterranean. Local ferry services mainly depart from Eminönü, Karaköy, Üsküdar and Beşiktaş.

Traditional ferries operated by the Municipal Routes division of Turkish Maritime Lines sail from Eminönü on The Haliç between Galata Bridge and Sirkeci Station, several times daily on a half-day cruise up the Bosphorus. They go almost to the mouth of the Black Sea and stop at towns including Beşiktaş, Kadiköy and Üsküdar.

There are also frequent, more modern boats operated by **Turyol**, a private company (☎ 0212-2514421, www.turyol.com.tr). They depart from docks on the west side of the Galata Bridge. Most journeys cost less than a dollar. You can buy your ticket at the jetty, where timetables are displayed.

Cruises go along the same route to the end of the Bosphorus and stop at Anadolu Kavagi for a seafood lunch before traveling the journey south (☎ 0212-5220045).

Yachting is available at the two large marinas in the area: **Ataköy Marina** (☎ 0212-5604270) on the European side, and **Amiral Fahri Koruturk Marina** (☎ 0216-3462346) on the Asian side. The **Atlantis Yachting Learning Center** (☎ 0216-3374911, www.atlantisyacht.com) offers sailing lessons. Serious sailors should try the **Istanbul Sailing Academy** (☎ 0216-44995 60, www.istsailing.com).

DIVING

Most Istanbul-based divers travel the 310 km/193 miles to explore the sites around **Çanakkale** and **Saroz**, where the seabed is littered with the rusting remnants of ships that were lost during the battles at Gallipoli. The area has deepwater points with orange coral and a varied marine life. (See *Adventures on Water* in the Thrace & Marmara chapter.)

Istanbul Diving School, Cakmak Sokak 20/26, Sefakoy ☎ 0212-5413728, www.atlantis-scuba.com, has an extensive training program from beginner to instructor level. All courses last for two weeks and involve four two-hour classroom sessions at the school before practical tuition begins at Saroz on weekends. The beginner course covers the basics of using a decompression chamber, buoyancy, hand signals

and safety rules. It includes four open water dives and leads to a One Star Diver qualification that means you can dive with an instructor. The school also runs Two Star and Three Star courses, the highest level before divers can take instructor training. The courses cost $220. Instructor courses give divers professional qualifications to train others. The courses cost $440. Divers must have their own mask, fins and snorkel, which can be purchased from the school's Atlantis Dive store. Other equipment is provided.

FISHING

Galata Bridge, connecting European and Asian Istanbul, is packed with fishermen every day from dawn until sunset. Hundreds of fishing rods hang from the bridge into the murky water of the Bosphorus. You can join the fishermen, as licenses are not required for amateurs.

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

At first glance Istanbul does not look like a city to walk around. Aside from its daunting size, it has steep hills, rugged pavements and little regard is paid to pedestrians by drivers. But the city is absolutely packed with interesting neighborhoods and the best off-the-beaten-track markets and cafés are often missed in a taxi. So divide the city into sections and spend a day exploring the places where the locals go.

CITY WALKING TOURS

One of the best walks is through **Sultanahmet to Eminönü**. Start at Sultanahmet Square to see the Blue Mosque and Aya Sofya, then walk west down Divan Yolu, the ancient road that takes you down to Beyazit Square to admire the Beyazidiye Camii. From here, follow Cadircilar Caddesi to the Grand Bazaar to your right. At the north end of the covered market at Şeker Amet Paşa Sokak, turn left and walk down to Süleymaniye, an unspoiled district with traditional wooden houses and the imperial mosque of Süleyman the Magnificent. Take Ismetiye Caddesi, which turns into Vasif Cinar Caddesi, and turn left on to Saka Mehmet Sokak to the Egyptian Bazaar.

I recommend wandering around the area between **Beyazit Square and Galata Bridge**. This is one of the city's most picturesque districts, where streets are named after the tradesmen who carry on their activities there.

Lots of agencies organize walking tours; details can be found at the Tourist Information Office. The following offer the most interesting and varied tours.

Istanbul Walks (☎ 0216-4896032, www.istanbulwalks.com) organizes tours that pack in the main sights of Pera and Galata, and Sultanahmet that last a couple of hours and cost $15.

Fes Travel (☎ 0212-2161036, www.festravel.com) organizes private cultural tours designed to give a flavor of the city's architecture, history and religion. The company has a range of itineraries, including strolls around Galata, Pera and the Golden Horn. There are also art nouveau and architectural tours.

You can take a tour of the Greek and Jewish influences on the city or the Ottoman and Byzantian relics with **Les Arts Turcs**, based in Sultanahmet (☎ 0212-5207743, www.oldistanbul.com).

Photography enthusiasts should contact **Gocerler Photo Club** (☎ 0216-4144474) for a tour that will capture the best views of the city.

HIKING & TREKKING

There are plenty of opportunities to get out of the city and trek through parks and along the nearby coastline. **Adventure Tours** (☎ 0212-5208720, www.adventuretours.com.tr) has four trekking routes withing a two-hour drive of Istanbul. Excursions start between 7 and 8:15am and last 12 hours, on average. Hikers must have good walking boots and a day pack. The tours cost between $55 and $85 per person.

The first trek is to the village of **Kurudere**, near Şile on the western Black Sea coast. It follows the length of Göksu Canyon past Göksu brook to the Kurudere Valley, where there are three waterfalls and a small cave.

The nearby village of **Yuvacik**, just outside Izmit, is the start of the second trek. This four-hour walk goes along the Ballikayalar Canyon alongside a fast-flowing stream.

The third route begins and ends at **Balaban**, also near Izmit. It travels alongside a stream through a forest to a trout farm, where participants have lunch, before heading back to Balaban.

Traveling farther east from Izmit brings you to **Lake Sapanca** in the Sakarya Valley. The lake is ringed by highways, though there are paths to take you away from the noise of choking traffic. The four-hour trek follows a stream down to the lake.

GYMS & FITNESS CENTERS

Most five-star hotels have fitness gyms, classes and saunas that guests can use free and non-guests can pay to use. The city also has plenty of sports clubs.

Try the **Marmara** Gym at the Marmara Istanbul (☎ 0212-2514696), a high-tech fitness center with a great view of Taksim. It also has an outdoor pool.

The **Ceylan Inter-Continental Health Club** (☎ 0212-3684444) has state-of-the-art fitness equipment and aerobics classes.

The Hillside City Club-Trio (☎ 0216-3241111) has tennis, squash and a swimming pool.

City Zen (☎ 0212-3440959) is a posh health club and spa offering classes in pilates.

GOLF

The first fairways in Turkey opened in the late 1800s. Even so, until the past decade the country was rarely viewed as a golf destination. That changed after the Turkish government developed first-class golf courses in a bid to attract more wealthy visitors.

> **NOTE:** *Some golf courses allow players to pay for a day of golf, while others require you to be a member or a guest of a member.*

There are three main course in Istanbul. **Istanbul Golf Club** (☎ 0212-2640742) in the Ayazaga district is the oldest club in the country, opened in 1895. The compact nine-hole course is located in the business district on the European side of the city.

Kemer Golf and Country Club (☎ 0212-239 7770, www.kg-cc.com) is 18 km/11 miles from Istanbul in Belgrad Forest, near the town of Kemerburgaz. The 18-hole course offers a good test of skill. One of the club's objectives is to make the sport available to the wider public and there is a good social scene in the clubhouse.

© Klassis Golf & Country Club

Klassis Golf & Country Club (65 km/40 miles from Istanbul at Silivri, ☎ 0212-7101300, www.klassis.com.tr), was designed by Tony Jacklin and is one of the area's largest golf clubs. It has twice hosted the PGA European Challenge Tour. The green fee for 18 holes is $60 and for nine holes it is $40. The club also has a health farm, tennis court and swimming pool.

Tour operators offer various golf packages. Try **Deren Koray** (☎ 0232-4410436, www.turkishtravel.com).

ADVENTURES ON HORSEBACK

A love of horses has always been part of Turkish culture. Istanbul has several horse riding schools and a pony club for young riders. Experienced riders can trek through the forests and countryside surrounding the city, while newcomers can take lessons at one of the riding schools. Be thorough in checking out the school's credentials and the standard of horses.

Klassis Golf and Country Club (see above), has a riding club and pony riding school set in an oak forest.

Pony Club Istanbul (☎ 0212-2038332, www.ponyclubist.com) has everything from riding lessons for novices to endurance riding and fun days for children.

ADVENTURES IN THE AIR

Anyone seeking thrills should take a five-hour tour of Istanbul and the Bosphorus by plane. **Adventure Tours** (☎ 0212-5208720) has flights in its Cessna 210 to give a bird's eye view of the city. Tours are limited to five people and cost $195.

CULTURAL ADVENTURES

Atatürk said, "Culture is the foundation of the Turkish Republic." The founder of modern Turkey made the adoption of Western culture and arts one of the priorities of his Republican-era reforms. His vision for a country with a rich and varied cultural scene is best captured in Istanbul. Aided by the growing youth population, there has been an explosion of festivals, art galleries, music clubs and theaters. Turkish films, artists, designers and musicians are now receiving acclaim across Europe.

Tickets for most cultural events are available from **Biletix** (☎ 0216-4541555, www.biletix.com.tr). Biletix has outlets at Ada bookshop on Istiklal Caddesi and at Raksotek record stores.

Good sources for listings are ***The Guide Istanbul*** *(www.theguideturkey.com) and the* ***Istanbul City Guide*** *(www.istanbulcityguide.com). Also, the* ***Turkish Daily News****, an English-language newspaper, has useful for information on cultural events.*

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Turkish films are making an impact on world cinema, though Hollywood films still dominate and are generally screened in English with Turkish subtitles. Going to the movies is an extremely popular pastime in Istanbul. Cinemas range from nostalgic old theaters around Taksim to multiplexes in luxury shopping malls. Ticket prices vary.

The popularity of film in Istanbul has fueled the growth of The International Istanbul Film Festival held in April. It takes place in cinemas around Taksim and Beyoğlu, and shows Turkish films alongside lesser-known foreign films.

Tickets for the festival are available at cinemas such as Alkazar Cinema Center (☎ 0212-2932466) and Emek (☎ 0212-2938439) and from ticketing company Biletix (see above).

MUSIC & DANCE

Music is everywhere in Istanbul, with traditional styles ranging from folk music to haunting pop ballads known as Arabesk and Asian-influenced songs. They are played in every taxi and restaurant in the city, as well as at concerts. There are also plenty of home-grown rock and pop bands playing at music venues and nightclubs. The fly posters and banners on the Istiklal Caddesi are the best source of information about contemporary music concerts.

Summer signals festival season, with the pop, classical and jazz festivals, as well as various other concerts.

INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

This festival in July is one of the city's premier events, attracting top international contemporary and traditional jazz musicians, as well as pop, rock and world music. The city's music venues and nightclubs come alive for the festival, which typically has about 300 performers. Among the many luminaries to have graced the stage in the past are Ray Charles, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Jan Garbarek, Diane Reeves and Elvis Costello. Details from the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Art (IKSV), ☎ 0212-334 0700, www.istfest.org.

Istanbul has great venues, such as **The Atatürk Cultural Centre** (☎ 0212-2515600), which stages festival events, as well as the State Opera and Ballet and the State Symphony Orchestra. The opera and ballet season begins in October. The most stunning venue is **Aya Irini Church**, in the grounds of Topkapi Palace, where classical music is played during the International Istanbul Music Festival in June and July and the International Classical Music Festival in June (see www.istfest.org for details). Concerts are also held in Rumeli Hisari, the great fortress that stands guard over the Bosphorus. (For tickets see Biletix www.biletix.com.)

The **Open Air Theatre** in the Harbiye district (☎ 0212-2966006), hosts contemporary concerts and events during the International Istanbul Jazz Festival. The indoor **Cemal Resit Rey Concert Hall** in Harbiye (☎ 0212-2485392), is a busy concert and exhibition venue.

For a change of theme, the **French Culture Centre** on Istiklal Caddesi (☎ 0212-3348740) has French film screenings and dance performances.

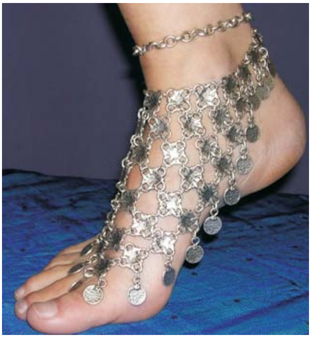
Dance Lessons

A visitor to Istanbul will find it difficult to avoid bellydancing. The dance originates from Turkish nomadic gypsies who mixed their style of dancing with that of Oriental dances originating in Asia. Strangely, the term "belly dance" is thought to have been coined at the Chicago

World Fair in 1893. Today, bellydancing is mainly a tourist attraction and has been made more erotic.

Many hotels and nightclubs have Turkish-themed evenings with belly dancing and local cuisine. Unfortunately, they can be quite shoddy and over-priced. If you want to see one of the world's oldest dances done in style, try the **Turkish Cultural Dance Theater** (☎ 0212-5178692).

If you want to join in the fun, **Istanbul Dreams** (Alemdar Mah. Incilicavua Sokak, Ates Pasaji 33-35, ☎ 0212-5145894, www.istanbuldreams.com, www.bellydanceinistanbul.com, contact Ercan Turkcan or Claudia) offers classes with a beautiful teacher called Gamze, who used to dance at Karavansaray. The classes are run for groups of five-10 people who wear a brightly-colored sequined belt while they attempt to keep up with Gamze's unrelenting shimmying. The classes start with a warm-up and then move on to some of the sassy moves of bellydancing, including hip-shaking turns and elaborate arm movements all set to a pulsating gypsy beat. Exhausting, but great fun. If you want a memento, souvenir costumes start at 100 euros; professional hand-stitched costumes start at 180 euros.



Bellydance jewelry is also for sale

Potential ballerinas of any age can attend the **Ulusoy Ballet School** (☎ 0212-4282119), the most famous and respected ballet school in Turkey.

Lessons are also available for salsa, the tango and even Irish dance. It may not very Turkish, but it promises to be fun. **Alberto's Salsa Productions** (☎ 0212-3514833) runs workshops on salsa, merengue and bolero, as well as jazz dance.

The Irish Centre (Istiklal Caddesi, Balo Sokak 26 Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2447970, www.theirishcentre.com) runs classes in traditional Irish dancing and flamenco. There is also a Latin night held every Thursday to practice your steps. Groups can book additional classes, such as American Step Dancing.

Tangoist (☎ 0212-2514726), a professionally-run outfit, offers tango classes on most days at various city venues.

Learning the language is one of the essential ways of getting to know people and their culture. You can learn Turkish in four weeks at the ***Dilmer Language Center*** *(☎ 0212-2929696, www.dilmer.com) in Istanbul.*

THEATER

Plays by international and Turkish playwrights are frequently staged in Istanbul, many in smaller venues off Istiklal Caddesi. The more commercial shows are at the Atatürk Cultural Center.

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

This May festival brings together hundreds of actors, directors, choreographers and writers from across Europe and the US for plays, exhibitions, workshops and seminars. The festival has been running for 15 years. Many visitors are surprised by the low price of tickets for events during festival season. Tickets sell out quickly. ☎ 0212-3340700, www.istfest.org).

ART

The **Istanbul Modern** (Meclis-i-Mebusan Caddesi Liman Isletmeleri Sahasi Antrepo 4, open 10pm-6pm, closed Monday, entrance fee, ☎ 0212-3347300, www.istanbulmodern.org) opened at the end of 1994 and aims to attract one million visitors a year. The vast gallery overlooks the Bosphorus from the dockside in Karaköy. It houses modern Turkish sculpture and paintings from the 20th century. On the lower level there is a photography gallery and cinema. The gallery also attracts trendy Istanbulites to its café, which serves elegant and reasonably priced food with funky music late into the evening. The gallery can be difficult to find. Take the tram to Dolmabahçe and walk back along the dockside towards Karaköy.

> **TIP:** *Plan to visit The Istanbul Modern on Thursdays between 10am and 2pm, when there is no admission fee.*

The streets around Istiklal Caddesi and Taksim Square have an abundance of private art galleries. The **Borusan Center for Culture and Art** (☎ 0212-2920655, www.borusansanat.com) has Turkish and international modern art exhibitions. **Galeri Inin** (☎ 0212-2435302, www.in-in.net) is a trendy gallery showcasing modern art.

The annual **Contemporary Artist Istanbul Exhibition** celebrates the work of young local artists, many of whom progress to become internationally renowned. It's held at the Akbank Culture and Arts Centre (☎ 0212-2523500, www.akbanksanat.com).

Art Courses

Les Arts Turcs is a cultural organization that runs art courses from its gallery in Sultanahmet. The courses cover Byzantine, Ottoman and modern art and teach calligraphy, painting, mosaics and sculpture. The classes are led by Turkish artists and offer the chance to tour their exhibitions. Courses start at $53. ☎ 0212-5112198, www.lesartsturcs.com.

COOKERY SCHOOLS

Cook Book, Guzelbahçe Sokak 5, Nisantasi, ☎ 0212-2191394, www.cookbook-nisantasi.com. Cook Book has been running cookery courses in Italian, Chinese, Mexican, French, Ottoman cuisines since 1999. Once-weekly classes last two hours. The chefs, Burcu Ongor and Ebru Suner, are Swiss-educated friends. You can also purchase rare ingredients at the school.

Cooking Alaturk, www.cookingalaturka.com. Eveline, a Dutch chef, uses her training at Paris' renowned Cordon Bleu school to host Turkish cookery classes. Eveline moved to Istanbul five years ago after becoming mesmerized with it during visits to the city. She wrote about her experience in *Tales From the Expat Harem*, an anthology of stories about foreign women living in Turkey (see *Recommended Reading*, page 603). Her classes are lively and fun, with students learning traditional methods to make a three-course meal, which is then eaten over a leisurely lunch. The classes are for groups of six-10 people. Older children would also enjoy them.

Cacik, a traditional soup

Swissotel Training Kitchen at Swissotel The Bosphorus, ☎ 0212-3261100, www.istanbul.swissotel.com. The cookery school runs daily and monthly cookery classes.

ADVENTURES FOR THE BODY & SOUL

TURKISH BATHS

Being stripped, scrubbed and massaged on a hot, marble slab is one of the essential things to do when visiting Turkey. A Turkish bath, or *hamam*, is the closest thing to the fountain of youth that I have found.

Turkish bath houses had a boom during the Ottoman Empire (1453-1923), when few homes had piped water. They were not only a way of bathing, which is very important for Muslims, but a place to socialize. Most five-star hotels have a *hamam* and it is respectful to stick to the tradition of segregated bathing. For the real Turkish experience, go to one of the 100 or so public bath houses, the most famous of which is the ornate, 300-year-old **Cağaloğlu Hamami**, ☎ 0212-5222424, www.cagalogluhamami.com.tr (open 8am-10pm). It is located in Sultanahmet and is popular with tourists, which means it can be pricey.

Süleymaniye Hamam, ☎ 0212-5203410 (open 6:30am-midnight) has reopened after being closed to the public for about 75 years. The *hamam* was built in the mid-1500s.

Çemberlitas Hamam, ☎ 0212-5227974, www.cemberlitashamami.com.tr (open 6am-midnight) is a traditional-style bath house. Credit cards accepted.

> **NOTE:** *Many hamams do not accept credit cards, but that should not present a problem as the cost is only a few lira.*

SHOPPING

Luxury shopping malls, antique shops and bustling markets makes Istanbul a magnet for shopaholics. Turkey is renowned for its leather, textiles, kilims and jewelry, all of which can be bought very cheaply from markets. High-fashion clothes, gifts and furniture, can be bought at independent stores and malls.

The best shopping districts are the **Grand Bazaar**, **Ortaköy** for arts and crafts, **Nisantasi** and **Istiklal Caddesi** for fashion, and the **Egyptian Bazaar** for spices and herbs.

Slippers for sale at the Grand Bazaar (© Jan McGready)

Bargaining, or pazarlik, is an integral part of the city's markets. There are rarely price tags, so it is up to you to determine the price. Expect to take your time and agree a price over a cup of Turkish tea.

BOUTIQUES

To see popular Turkish fashion designers head to the Rumeli Caddesi in Nisantasi or visit the boutiques on Istiklal Caddesi in modern Istanbul.

Vakko, Istiklal Caddesi 123, is one of the country's oldest and most elegant fashion boutiques. Former US president Bill Clinton has been seen wearing one of their ties.

Sofa Boutique, Nuruosmaniye Caddesi, is great for old maps and prints, original Iznik and Kütahya ceramics, vintage jewelry and other treasures.

Chalabi, Mim Kemal Oke Caddesi in Nisantasi, sells Ottoman-era furniture, European antiques, ceramics and paintings.

Mistlik, Terlikciler Sokak 58 in the Grand Bazaar, has a great range of silk scarves, unusual gifts, textiles and ethnic jewelry by a local designer.

Hazal Hali, Mecidiyekoy Koprusu Sokak in Ortaköy, close to the mosque, sells wonderful kilims carefully chosen for their quality.

Artisan, Zafer Sokak 5 in Nisantasi, is one of the city's premier shops for haute couture.

Bahar Korcan, Abdi Ipekci Caddesi 19 in Nisantasi, is a fashion designer and tailor.

Mayadrom Shopping Mall, Akatlar, ☎ 0212-3523122, is the crème de la crème of shopping. It has boutiques, restaurants and a movie theater.

Markiz Passage, Istiklal Caddesi, ☎ 0212-2517580, is a quaint selection of shops in a restored historical building.

MARKETS & BAZAARS

If you love markets, then Istanbul is your city. There are colorful markets selling everything from spices to stereos. The streets are brimming with animated vendors every day of the week. Fake designer clothes, paintings, handmade crafts, kilims, fresh fish and vegetables, and mounds of olives and figs are sold from carts and blankets. Wonderful aromas emanate from bakeries that have stood for decades, while old men sit at cafés or on door stoops to watch the passing trade.

The markets give a real insight into Turkish culture and a chance to mix with Istanbulites who are genuinely friendly and interested in finding out about other countries. English is not spoken as widely in Asian Istanbul as it is on the European side, so it helps to have some basic phrases.

USEFUL PHRASES FOR THE SHOPPER

Market	Pazar
Price	Fiyat
Cheap	Ucuz
Expensive	Pahali
Big	Büyük
Small	Kücük
How much is it?	Ne kadar?
How many?	Kaç tane?
Do you take credit cards?	Kredi karti alir misiniz?
I would like....	Isterim...
Yes/No	Evet/Hayir
Thank you	Teşekkur ederim/mersi

Opposite: Lanterns at the Grand Bazaar (© Paradokz_blizanaca/Dreamstime.com)

The following are the city's best bazaars.

Kapali Çarşi, or Grand Bazaar (see page 116), has about 4,000 shops. Walk around the labyrinth of alleys and take in the sumptuous sights, sounds and smells. The goods on offer range from antiques, leather goods and tourist souvenirs to jewelry and textiles.

Food lovers must visit the **Bahik Pazari** in Galatasaray, where fresh salmon, swordfish and tuna, exotic spices, teas, quail eggs and sun-dried tomatoes are sold. The **Egyptian bazaar** in Eminönü has a variety of spices, fruit, nuts and delicious royal jelly from the beehives of the Aegean Sea. Take a trip up the Bosphorus to **Kadiköy's food market** for peppers, varieties of local cheeses, dried spiced beef, sausages, braised beef, teas and herbs.

Ortaköy's open-air **craft market** on Sunday is the perfect place for leisurely shopping. The flea market has stalls selling jewelry, silk scarves, books and antiques.

Üsküdar is well known for its old market streets selling traditional local produce and a good flea market with second-hand furniture.

The **Sali Pazar**, "Tuesday market," in Kadiköy is one of the biggest and best markets in the area, with about 1,900 stalls. Everything is sold here, including famous brand textile products, shoes, carpets, electronic products, glassware and pottery. To reach the market, walk towards Altoyöl from the Kadaköy ferry where the cry of traders and the chatter of shoppers reverberate around the streets.

Eggplants for sale

Another huge market is **Yeşilköy Çarsamba Pazari** at Yeşilköy Cirpici. It's held on Wednesdays and stalls sell food, clothing and an array of imported goods.

The biggest bazaar in Istanbul is **Fatih Çarsamba Pazari**, which stretches across 17 streets every Wednesday. It attracts about 2,500 market traders, so just imagine how many customers there are. Some vendors accept credit cards. It is open from 5am to 9pm.

Istanbul's markets are always bustling with people attracted by the huge choice and cheap prices, so arrive early in the morning to avoid the crowds and bag the best bargains.

You can hunt for bargains on the hidden treasure of Istanbul: ***Bagdat Caddesi****. The street not only has the most expensive real estate on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, it also has a vast choice of Turkish and American brand shops.*

SPORTS STORES

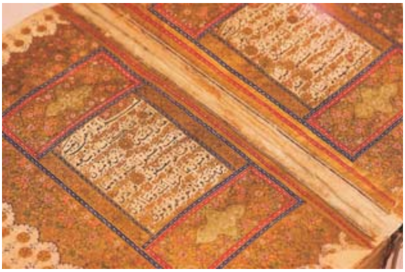
Adrenalin Tirmanis ve Doğa Sporlari, Ortabahçe Caddesi 19, Beşiktaş, ☎ 0212-2606002, stocks a full range of camping, trekking and climbing equipment, so you do not have to worry about packing everything before you leave home.

Marintek, Bağdat Caddesi 30, ☎ 0216-3491661, has scuba diving and boat equipment.

Sportpoint Extreme, Akmerkez Shopping Mall, ☎ 0212-2820436, and Galleria Shopping Mall, ☎ 0212-6614300, has ski, snowboarding, skateboarding and tennis supplies.

BOOKSTORES

The Ottomans were masters of calligraphy, embellishing the page with dust from sapphires, gold and other gems. The pages were often decorated with colorful scenes from the life of a sultan and his family. The best places to hunt for rare books are the **Sahaflar Çarşisi** and near Tünel in Beyoğlu.



Examples of Ottoman calligraphy

FOOD SHOPPING

Food shopping is a tempting affair. In addition to the markets, there are pastry shops, delicatessens, Turkish delight shops and gourmet wine sellers. The experience involves a lot of tasting, so enjoy!

PASTRY SHOPS

Asli Borek, various outlets, ☎ 0212-2255845, sells a selection of borek, made of thin pastry roll filled with meat, cheese and *boreks*, spinach, which make a delicious snack.

© Alibaba.com

Turkish Delight

Divan Pastry Shop, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 2, Elmadağ, ☎ 0212-2333507, has an excellent range of cakes, pastries and Turkish delight.

Gezi Istanbul Patisserie, Inönü Caddesi 5, Taksim, ☎ 0212-2925353, is a 20-year-old pastry shop and café selling a wonderful range of chocolates, sweets and cakes. If you only visit one pastry shop, this is the one to enjoy.

Karaköy Gulluoğlu, Mumhane Caddesi 171, Karaköy, ☎ 0212-2431376, is famous for its baklava, a very sweet Turkish dessert pastry.

DELICATESSENS

Antre Gourmet Shop, Akarsu Caddesi 52, Cihangir, ☎ 0212-2928972, has more than 40 varieties of cheese, *mezes*, baklava and jams.

Namli Sarkuteri, Hasircilar Caddesi 14, Eminönü, ☎ 0212-5116393, prepares its own appetizers and meats.

Pera Sarkuteri & Market, Sahne Sokak 25, Balikpazari, ☎ 0212-2456936, caters for gourmet tastes with imported caviar, deli meats and appetizers.

Santral Sarkuteri, Cevdetpasa Caddesi 22, ☎ 0212-2636352, is a great deli with European and American products such as peanut butter and cookies.

OLIVE OILS, NUTS & NATURAL PRODUCTS

Bakkal, Tünel Meydani 14, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2491855, sells natural and organic food and home products.

City Farm, Büyükdere Caddesi 57, Maslak, ☎ 0212-3515375, has delicious breads, cheese, olive oil and other natural products.

Ecolife, Manolya Sokak 7, Bebek, ☎ 0212-3584310, sells every kind of natural ingredient from honey to dried fruit.

Koyevi, Nushetive Caddesi 37, Beşiktaş, ☎ 0212-2616925, specialises in home-grown olive oil, jam, marmalade and yogurt. There is also a tempting café.

Troia, Zeytinoglu Caddesi 76, Akatlar Etiler, ☎ 0212-3526326, sells the purest olive oil, certified for not having any chemicals. It also sells farm fresh eggs, organic cheese and yogurt.

NIGHTLIFE

Istanbul has great nightlife, with bars and nightclubs to suit every taste. There are cosy *meyhane* (taverns) serving Turkish *meze* and local drinks alongside trendy nightclubs for fashion-conscious Istanbulites. Many large hotel chains have their own discos and cabaret.

A traditional meyhane

BARS

Bebek Bar, Bebek Hotel, Bebek, ☎ 0212-3582000, open 4pm-1am. This hotel bar is on the Bosphorus and has a great view. It offers a long menu of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and snacks.

Café In, Abdi Ipekci Caddesi 7, Nisantasi, ☎ 0212-2410936, open 12pm-12am. Café In has stunning black, white and silver decor. The bar is becoming increasingly popular.

Camelot Pub, Haci Adil Caddesi 4, Levent, ☎ 0212-3256821, open 12pm-1am, is a lively bar for early evening drinks.

The James Joyce Irish Pub, Irish Cultural Centre, Istiklal Caddesi, Balo Sokak 26, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2447970, open 1pm-2am. The only Irish bar in Istanbul, James Joyce has been around for eight years. It recently moved location to the new Irish Cultural Centre. There is Irish music in the evenings and traditional Irish grub, including shepherd's pie, Irish stew and a full Irish breakfast with black and white pudding.

The Library, Hyatt Regency Hotel, ☎ 0212-3681234, open 5:30pm-2am. There's an English country house atmosphere in this cigar bar. Live music. The **Gossip Bar** in the hotel has Latin nights with salsa dancing every Thursday and Friday.

V.S.O.P. Bar, The Marmara Istanbul, ☎ 0212-2449700, open 12pm-12am. This English-style library bar in the lobby of the hotel is a cosy place to sip pre-drinner drinks.

BARS WITH VIEWS

City Lights Bar, Ceylan InterContinental Hotel, ☎ 0212-3684444, open 2pm-2am. Enjoy cocktails with a magnificent view of the city from this high-rise hotel.

Four Seasons Hotel, Tevkifhane Sokak 1, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-6388200. Enjoy cocktails on the rooftop bar with views of the Blue Mosque and Aya Sofya. The bar is sophisticated, the drinks menu is long and the views are wonderful.

© Seven Hills Hotel

Seven Hills Hotel, Tevkifhane Sokak 8, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5169498, www.hotel sevenhills.com, 12pm-late, has a roof terrace bar with 360° views of Sultanahmet, the Asian shores and the Sea of Marmara. The service is relaxed. This place has the best view in Istanbul.

Summit Lounge, Conrad Istanbul Hotel, ☎ 0212-2273000, open 12pm-1.30am. Located on the 14th floor of the hotel, there is a panoramic view of the Bosphorus.

NIGHTCLUBS

Andon Bar, Siraselviler Caddesi 89, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2510222, open 5pm-3am, credit cards accepted. Andon Bat is a five-storey building with different music and themes on each floor.

Babylon, Seyhbender Sokak 3, Asmalimescit Tünel, ☎ 0212-2927368, www.babylon-ist.com, open 9pm-late, closed Sunday and Monday. Babylon is the city's premier live music club with jazz, world music and electronica.

Crystal Lounge, Muallim Naci Caddesi 65, Ortaköy, ☎ 0212-2611988, open Thursday-Saturday 11:30pm-5:30am. The club is set in a garden and can pack in 800 people. The DJs play funky house music.

Gunay Restaurant, Büyükdere Caddesi, Sisli, ☎ 0212-2303333, open Friday and Saturday evenings. At Gunay, famous Turkish singers entertain over a set-menu dinner. Reservations required.

Hayal Kahvesi Cabuklu, Burunbahçe, Beykoz, ☎ 0216-4136880, open 12pm-2am. An elegant bar on the shoreline. In summer, a private boat runs every half-hour from Istinye to the bar.

New Yorker Balo Bar, Istiklal Caddesi Balo Sokak 6, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2446860, open 6pm-late. A smart venue with a New York-style restaurant and cocktail bar.

Reina, Muallim Naci Caddesi 10, Ortaköy, ☎ 0212-2595919, open 6pm-late. Reina is the club of the moment in Istanbul. It has several bars and dance floors and can cram in 2,500 people. It's the favorite hangout of Turkish models, celebrities and business people.

Roxy, Arslan Sokak, Siraselviler, Taksim, ☎ 0212-2494839, open 6pm-3.30am. A trendy club with excellent bands.

Samdan, Nispetiye Caddesi 30, Etiler, ☎ 212-2634898. A small, very popular nightclub and restaurant that has been around for 30 years. Dress up.

Soho Supper Club, Meselik Sokak 11, Taksim, ☎ 0212-2450152. This bar and club attracts the rich and beautiful of Istanbul's celebrity circuit. It serves up expensive cocktails and great music.

Tampa Istanbul, Muallim Naci Caddesi 119, ☎ 0212-2367256, open 7pm-3am. The chic club has a regular following of trendy locals who come for the Mediterranean food and the Bosphorus views as much as the music.

TAVERNS (*MEYHANE*)

Turkish taverns serve *meze*, local alcoholic drinks and live traditional *fasil* music for a set price.

Cumhuriyet, Sahne Sokak 47, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2931977, open 10pm-2am. This huge three-storey *meyhane* was Atatürk's favorite.

Galatea, Sofyali Sokak 16, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2925431, open 8pm-3am. A typical Turkish tavern with hot and cold *meze* ordered à la carte or as a fixed menu. Live music.

Imroz, Nevizade Sokak 24, ☎ 0212-2499073, open 12pm-12:30am, opened in 1942, making it the oldest Greek-style *meyhane* in the city. This street is packed with *meyhane*.

WHERE TO STAY

Accommodation in Istanbul ranges from cheap hostels to luxury five-star hotels in line with those in major cities like New York and London.

HOTEL PRICES	
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Costs given here are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

HOTELS

FIVE STAR

© Ceylon Intercontinental

Ceylon InterContintal, Asker Ocagi Caddesi 1, ☎ 0212-3684444, www.interconti.com, is set in the center of the business district, near Taksim Park. It has 380 guest rooms, including suites for disabled people, an outdoor swimming pool and rooftop bar. There are Turkish, Californian and French restaurants. $$$$

© Crowne Plaza

Crowne Plaza Istanbul, Sahil Yolu Ataköy, ☎ 0212-5608100, www.crowneplaza.com. The Crowne Plaza is about eight km from the airport. There are 296 rooms overlooking the Marmara Sea, tennis courts, satellite T.V., swimming pool, fitness center, sauna and shopping arcade. It has three restaurants and bars. $$$$

© Ciragan Palace

Çirağan Palace Hotel Kempinski, Çirağan Caddesi, Beşiktaş, ☎ 0212-3264646, www.ciraganpalace.com, was voted in the world's top 15 hotels by Institutional Investor. The 284-room property has a superb setting on the Bosphorus. Facilities include two gourmet restaurants, a spa and a sauna. The Çirağan's heated swimming pool is situated on the edge of the water. $$$$

© Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts

AUTHOR PICK: Four Seasons Hotel, Tevkifhane Sokak 1, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-6388200, www.fourseasons.com. The Four Seasons picked a plum spot for its delightful hotel. This is a converted neoclassical prison and the staff claim etchings from prisoners can still be seen in the basement rooms. The 65-room hotel offers the ultimate room with a view experience. There is a lovely courtyard restaurant serving a spectacular buffet on Sundays. $$$$

© Hyatt Hotels

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Taskisla Caddesi, Taksim, ☎ 0212-3681234, www.istanbul.hyatt.com. This city-center hotel has 332 rooms and private apartments on the regency floor with its own separate lifts. There is an outdoor swimming pool, fitness center, tennis courts business facilities and two restaurants. $$$$

The Ritz Carlton Istanbul, Suzer Plaza Elmadağ, ☎ 0212-3344444, www.ritzcarlton.com. The Ritz Carlton is in the Dolmabahçe district, within walking distance of Beyolglu's restaurants. Many of the 244 luxurious rooms have views of the Bosphorus. There are spa facilities.

© The Ritz-Carlton

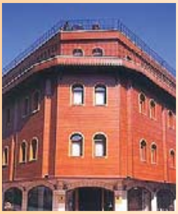
FOUR STAR

Best Western The President Hotel, Tiyatro Caddesi 25, Beyazit, ☎ 0212-5166980, www.thepresidenthotel.com. This hotel offers a Turkish restaurant and English-style pub with live music. There is a sun terrace and swimming pool. $$$

© Kalyon Hotel

Kalyon Hotel, Sahil Yolu, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5174400, www.kalyon.com. The 106-room Kalyon is a favorite, located on the coastal road near the main sites in Sultanahmet. Rooms have satellite TV and mini bar. $$$

Polat Renaissance, Sahil Caddesi, Yeşilyurt, ☎ 0212-6631700, www.polatrenaissance.com. The Polat is a modern business hotel near the airport. There is an American sports bar, as well as seafood, Turkish and Bavarian restaurants. $$$



© Seven Hills Hotel

AUTHOR PICK: Seven Hills Hotel, Tevkifhane Sokak 8, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5169498, www.hotelsevenhills.com. The 14 rooms at Seven Hills are decorated in traditional Ottoman style. A roof terrace bar gives the hotel a real wow factor. Service is extremely friendly. $$$

HISTORIC HOTELS

© Armada Hotel

Armada Hotel, Ahirkapi, ☎ 0212-4554455, www.armadahotel.com.tr. This attractive hotel was newly built but in the design of a 16th-century row house. It is tastefully decorated in traditional style and uses environmentally-friendly products, such as olive oil soap. It is the perfect location for excursions to the Blue Mosque and Aya Sofya. $$$

Ayasofya Pansiyonlari, Soğukçeşme Sokak, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5133660, www.ayasofya-pansiyonlari.com. The Ayasofya is a row of restored wooden guest houses on a cobblestoned street closed to traffic. The pensions are decorated with 19th-century furniture and have modern technology. There are three restaurants. $$$

© Empress Zoe

Empress Zoe, Akbiyik Caddesi, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5182504, www.emzoe.com. The American owner of Empress Zoe has created a beautiful 16-room hotel that incorporates a garden with the ruins of a 15th-century Turkish bath. Rooms have Byzantine wall paintings. There are garden suites for families and budget single rooms. $$

Hotel Splendid Palace, Nisan Caddesi 71, Büyükada, ☎ 0216-3826950. For spectacular sea views on the Princes' Islands, the Splendid Palace can't be beaten. Set in a historic building, it has a pool and garden restaurant. $$$

Hotel Megara, Akbyyyk Caddesi 85, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-4584848, www.hotelmegara.com. This yellow-painted wooden Ottoman house next to Topkapi Palace has simple rooms that are overshadowed by the outstanding Bosphorus views from the breakfast terrace. $$

AUTHOR PICK: Kybele Hotel, Yerebatan Caddesi 35, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5117766. Kybele is a small, family run hotel in the center of the Old City. It is filled with antiques, including more than 1,000 lanterns. The Turkish restaurant has live music. $$

© Pera Palas Hotel

AUTHOR PICK: Pera Palas Hotel, Meşrutiyet Caddesi 198, ☎ 0212-2514560, www.perapalas.com. Guests at this famous hotel have included Atatürk and, perhaps, Agatha Christie; see page 124 for more on that mystery. The rooms are spacious and decorated in very traditional style. There are numerous bars and restaurants, including the Orient Bar. Although the building is slightly faded, prices remain high because of the hotel's legacy. $$$

Vardar Palace Hotel, Siraselviler Caddesi 54, Taksim, ☎ 0212-2522888, www.vardarhotel.com. Vardar was designed and built by an Italian architect in 1901. It was restored as a 40-room hotel in 1991. Vardar Palace would suit anyone coming for shopping or the festivals held around Taksim. $$

Yeşil Ev, Kabasakal Caddesi 5, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5176785. Yeşil Ev is a restored wooden Ottoman mansion on a cobblestoned street near the Blue Mosque. It is beautifully decorated in period style and has a secluded garden and flower-filled conservatory. Rooms are smaller than in the chain hotels. $$$

APARTMENTS

Akmerkez Residence Apart Hotel, Etiler, ☎ 0212-2820120. This luxurious apartment complex is set in the Akmerkez shopping mall. The 10 apartments have one, two, or and three bedrooms as well as kitchens. The complex has business facilities, sauna, fitness suite and a delivery service from the nearby supermarket. $$$

Forest Bungalows, Kemerburgaz, next to Kemer Golf and Country Club, ☎ 0212-2397939. Bungalows, which sleep six people and have TV, kitchen and log fire, are suited to golfers and hikers. There is a tennis court and outdoor swimming pool on the site. $$

Galata Residence Apart Hotel, Bankalar Caddesi, Haci Ali Sokak, Galata, ☎ 0212-2526062, www.galataresidence.com. This 19th-century

Jewish residence formerly owned by the Comando stockbroking family has 15 large apartments with two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen and living area. Small double-bedroom apartments are also available. There is a cellar restaurant and free Internet connection. $$

Mega Residence, Eytam Caddesi 33, Maçka, ☎ 0212-2313161, www.megaresidence.com. Mega Residence is located close to the upmarket shopping and restaurant district of Nisantasi. The 30 apartments have kitchenettes. There are business facilities and private parking. $$

The Marmara Suadiye Residence, Bağdat Caddesi 473, Suadiye, ☎ 0216-4781010, www.themarmarahotels.com. Located on the Asian side of Istanbul, this complex boasts views of the Princes' Islands. Its 21 furnished apartments sleep up to six adults each. Amenities include laundry service, shopping service and a café and bar. $$

■ HOSTELS

© New Backpacker's

Family suite

New Backpackers, Akbiyik Caddesi 14, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-6385586, www.newbackpackers.com. This clean, non-smoking hostel in the center of Sultanahmet has a bar and BBQ area, plus a restaurant. Linen is provided and all rooms have en-suite bathrooms. There is Internet access and an airport pick-up service. $

Istanbul Hostel, Kutlu Gun Sokak 35, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5167553, promises a lively atmosphere. Accommodations are in dormitories, although some double rooms are available. Bathrooms are shared, outside the sleeping rooms. There is a sidewalk café and a bar with bellydancing and a disco. $

© Orient Youth Hostel

Orient Youth Hostel, Yeni Akbiyik Caddesi 13, Sultan- ahmet, ☎ 0212-5180789, www.orienthostel.com. There are dormitories and double rooms available at this friendly hostel situated on the hillside. A BBQ area and rooftop café and bar features entertainment, including movies, bellydancing and water-pipe nights. $

Paris Hotel and Hostel, Piyerloti Caddesi, Dizdariye Medresesi Sokak 9, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5189820. Dormitories here each with their own bathroom, plus there's a lounge, roof terrace, and a bar with belly dancing shows. Breakfast and all hot drinks are included. $

WHERE TO EAT

Turkish cuisine appeals to all tastes. What could be more appetizing than fresh meat and fish with salad, home-made breads and an abundance of appetizers? While Istanbul has five-star restaurants with international cuisine and amazing buffets, often the best food and service can be found in local eateries.

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

Note that most places take credit cards. Those that do not are noted as such.

RESTAURANTS

A'jia Restaurant, A'jia Hotel Kanlica, ☎ 0216-4139353, www.ajiarestaurant.com, open 12pm-12am. A'jia, located in a mansion on the Asian side of the city, serves Mediterranean and Italian food. $$$$

Asitane Restaurant, Kariye Hotel, Edirnekapi, ☎ 0212-5348414, open 3pm-10:30pm. The Ottoman cuisine served here uses recipes taken from the archives at the Topkapi Palace. The dishes are fit for sultans. $$$

Balikci Sabahattin, Seyt Hasankuyu Sokak 1, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-4582302, open 12pm-1am. Balikci Sabahattin has been serving great seafood dishes since 1927. $$$

Brasserie Nisantasi, Abdi Ipekci Caddesi 23, Nisantasi, ☎ 0212-3430443, open 10am-2pm for lunch and 7pm-11pm. A very chic French restaurant where reservations essential. $$$

Café du Levant, Hasköy Caddesi 27, ☎ 0212-2356328, open 12pm-2:30pm and 7pm-12am, closed on Monday. Here you can find a true Parisian atmosphere in the middle of Istanbul. $$$

Develi, Gumusyuzuk Sokak 7, Samatya, ☎ 0212-6327982, www.develikebap.com, open 12pm-12am. The first Develi was established in Gaziantep in 1912. The brand was brought to Istanbul in 1966 and has been a local favorite since. The restaurant serves dishes from southeastern Anatolia, including its famous eggplant kebab. $$

Hacibey Kebapcisi, Tesvikiye Caddesi 156, Tesvikiye, ☎ 0212-2317134, open 11:30am-10pm. Hacibey Kebapcisi serves traditional kebabs and cheese desserts. No alcohol. $

Hippopotamus Grill, Eski Büyükdere Caddesi 22, Maslak, ☎ 0212-3450835, open 12pm-12am. This is a good restaurant for children. It serves American-style steaks and other grilled food. $$

Kiyi Restaurant, Kefelikoy Caddesi 126, Tarabya, ☎ 0212-2620002, open 12pm-12am. Kiyi, a renowned seafood restaurant on the shoreline, caters to well-heeled business people. Blue fish and turbot are its specialities. Good atmosphere. $$$$

Korfez Restaurant, Korfez Caddesi 78, Kanlica, ☎ 0216-4134314. The service and food are fantastic, but the real reason to visit is the view of the Bosphorus Bridge by night. Make time for a meal here while you're in Istanbul. $$$

Lokanta, Meşrutiyet Caddesi 149, Tepebasi, ☎ 0212-2456070, open 12pm-10:30pm. Lokanta is a trendy restaurant serving international cuisine. It has a good selection of wines. The Nu Pera building the restaurant is housed in is home to several bars and there is a nightclub on the roof in summer. $$$

Marmit, Istanbul Caddesi 58, Yeşilköy, ☎ 0212-5738581, open 7:30pm-12am. Marmit is a bistro serving Mexican and South American specialities. Credit cards are not accepted. $$

Mezze Restaurant, Yazmaci Tahir Sokak 22, ☎ 0216-3025333, open 12pm-12am. Mezze is a well-priced kebab restaurant with a garden. $

Nature & Peace, Büyükparmakkapi Sokak 21, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2528609, open 10am-11:30pm, has vegan and vegetarian dishes, including pumpkin pie, alongside other healthy food. A good place to relax after a busy day of sightseeing. $

Rami Restaurant, Utangac Sokak 6, Cankurtaran, ☎ 0212-5176593, open 12pm-11:30pm, is romantic and cosy, decorated in Ottoman style with cuisine to match. A wood-burning stove heats the dining room in winter. $$$

Rejans Restaurant, Istiklal Caddesi, Olivio Gecidi 15, Galatasaray, ☎ 0212-2433882, open 3pm for lunch and 6pm for dinner. This is one of the oldest restaurants in Istanbul. It has been in the same location with the same menu since 1932. The menu has traditional Russian favorites, including beef stroganoff, chicken Kiev and beef stew. $$

Sunset Grill & Bar, Adnan Saygun Caddesi Yol Sokak 2, Ulus Parki, Ulus, ☎ 0212-2870357, open 12pm-3pm and from 7pm for dinner. Located on a hill near the park in Ulus, Sunset Grill has fantastic views of the Bosphorus and its mighty bridges. It is one of the swankiest restaurants in the city, with a choice of international, Turkish and sushi dishes, and a huge wine selection. In summer, dining is outside. $$$$

CAFÉS

All Sports Café, Camlik Yolu 1, Etiler, ☎ 0212-2574299. Predictably, this spot is decorated with antique sports gear.

Ay Café, Takkeciler Sokak 41, Grand Bazaar, ☎ 0212-5279853. Ay is a small café in the heart of the Grand Bazaar. A good place to watch the world go by.

Butterfly, Alkent Sites F Blok 7, Tepecik Yolu Etiler, ☎ 0212-3586121, is a charming café with tea-rooms located on the second floor. It serves French pastries to die for. Take-out available.

Café Creme, Mecidiye Koprusu Sokak 12, Ortaköy, ☎ 0212-2277294. A pretty café in the main square in Ortaköy, near the Bosphorus.

Harvard Café, Seheryildiz Sokak 6, Etiler, ☎ 0212-2871051, is set in a two-storey house. It serves appetizers, salads and main courses.

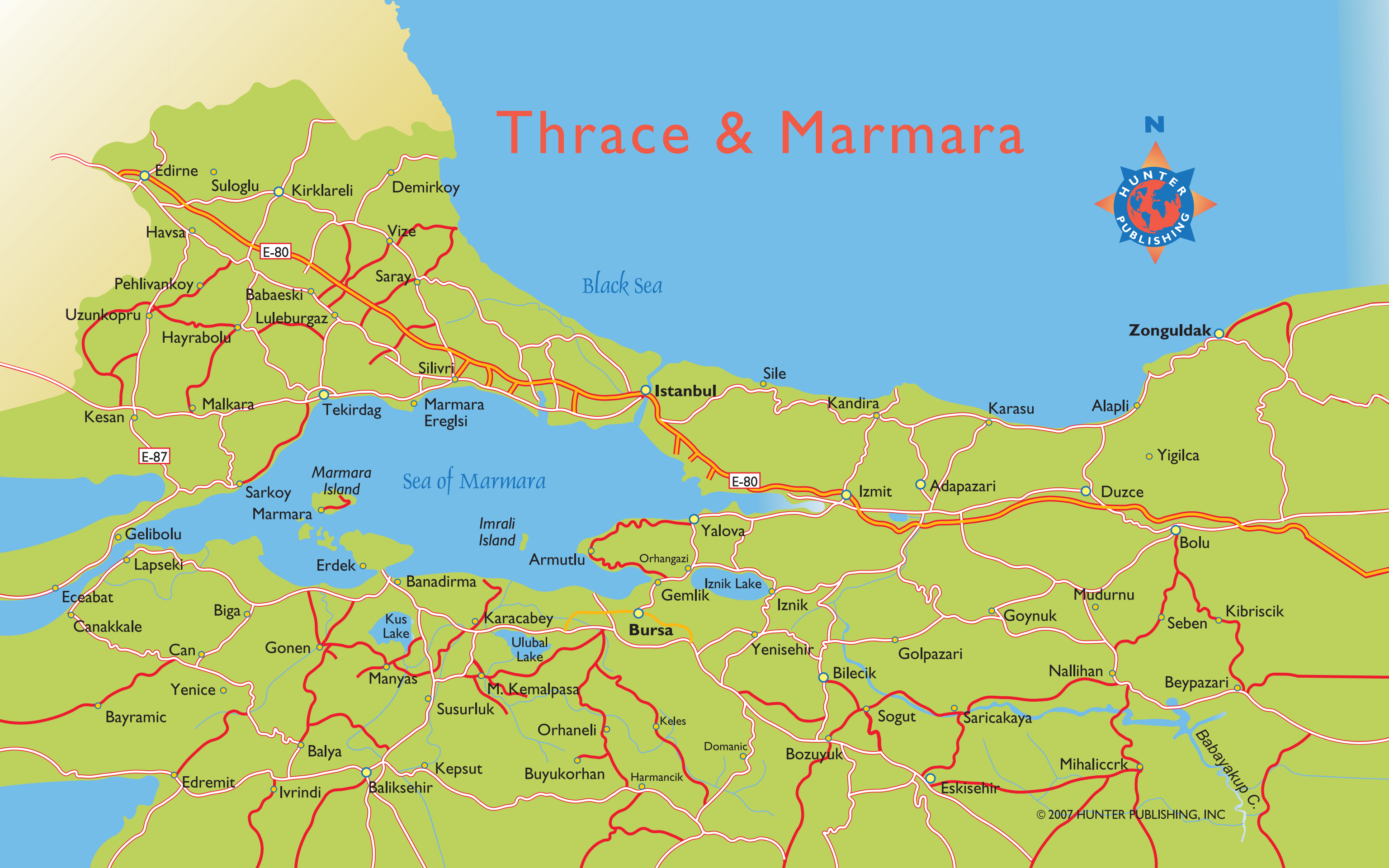
Kaktus Café & Bar, Imam Adnan Sokak 4, Beyoğlu, ☎ 0212-2495979, is a café/bar that draws much of its clientele from the literary and media industry. It serves varied appetizers and snacks.

Nady's, Cevdetpasa Caddesi, Sağlik Apt. 24, Bebek, ☎ 0212-2659429, www.nadys.com.tr. Nady's is a girl's paradise of enormous chocolate cakes served up amid a pink and lilac backdrop. The Bosphorus is right outside the window.

Num Num, G-Mall and Arts Center, Maçka, ☎ 0212-2962318, has a good selection of typically American food, including hamburgers, onion rings, salad, pizza and fantastic rich desserts.

Tarihi Sultanahmet Koftecisi, Divanyolu Caddesi 12, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5200566, has been dishing up fabulous kofte kebabs for more than 80 years.

Thrace & Marmara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Black Sea
Sea of Marmara
Marmara Island
Imrali Island
Kus Lake
Ulubal Lake
Iznik Lake
Babayakup C.
E-80
E-87
Edirne
Suloglu
Kirklareli
Demirkoy
Havsa
Vize
Saray
Pehlivankoy
Babaeski
Luleburgaz
Uzunkopru
Hayrabolu
Silivri
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Sile
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Zonguldak
Yigilca
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Lapseki
Eceabat
Canakkale
Erdek
Banadirma
Armutlu
Yalova
Orhangazi
Gemlik
Iznik
Mudurnu
Goynuk
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Bayramic
Susurluk
Orhaneli
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Domanic
Bozuyuk
Mihaliccrk
Balya
Kepsut
Buyukorhan
Harmancik
Eskisehir
Edremit
Ivrindi
Balikesehir

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Thrace & Marmara

More fighters, both ancient and modern, have laid down their lives on these lands than in any other part of the country. At Troy, warriors battled for so long they must have forgotten it was in all in the name of a woman with a beautiful face. But it was Gallipoli that saw the most tragic battles. Here, the brave souls knew they were fighting for control of the Dardanelles, a strategic stretch of water between the Aegean and the Sea of Marmara. But few would have predicted so many of them would die for their cause. The coastline of the peninsula has been left a wild and beautiful reminder of their deaths.

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The spirit and independence of modern Turkey rose from these burning trenches and yet, ironically, so many people in Thrace and Marmara cling to their Ottoman heritage. From architectural masterpieces such as Sinan's Selimiye Mosque in Edirne to the ramshackle painted houses in Bursa; the revival of the potteries in Iznik and the sultan's favorite, the spa.

A Hollywood film about Gallipoli attracted travelers by the thousand. The same is happening to Troy with the success of the film starring Brad Pitt. Doubtless many think the Hollywood sets are superior to the mounds of mud upon which Troy was built. But inquisitive minds will enjoy exploring the vineyards, secluded beaches, towering mosques and easygoing charm that encapsulate Thrace and Marmara.

© Samantha Lafferty

A lonely Gallipoli beach

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY PLANE

The chief entry point to the region is **Istanbul** (see page 101 for details of companies operating flights into the city). **Çanakkale** has a small airport for private planes (☎ 0286-2131021).

MAJOR ROADS

The fast **E-80 highway** connects Istanbul with **Edirne**, which lies near the border between Greece and Turkey. It takes about two hours to travel the 235 km/148 miles.

To reach the memorials on the Gallipoli Peninsula from Edirne, follow the **E-87** southbound for 220 km/137 miles. From Istanbul, take the **E-84** along the Sea of Marmara before picking up the E-87. The **E-90** connects Bursa, south of Yalova, with Çanakkale.

BY BUS

Buses depart every 20 minutes from Istanbul's **Büyük Otogar** to **Edirne**. The journey takes 2½-three hours. It is possible to take the bus in the morning, see the sights, and return to Istanbul in the early evening. Buses also travel the 230 km/143 miles to **Bursa** in about four hours. The journey to **Çanakkale**, 340 km/211 miles from Istanbul, takes 5½ hours.

BY SEA

You can check timetables and prices, and book tickets online at www.ido.com.tr.

ISTANBUL-YALOVA: Ferries depart every two hours to connect Istanbul's Yenikapi terminal with **Yalova**, across the Sea of Marmara. The trip takes one hour and 10 minutes and is the best way to make excursions from Istanbul to Bursa and Iznik. You can pick up a bus from the ferry terminal at Yalova to Bursa and Iznik.

A shorter route to Bursa has recently been introduced between Istanbul's Yenikapi terminal and Güzelyali (Bursa). Ferries depart from both terminals at 7:30am and 5:30pm Monday to Saturday, with an additional service at 8:30pm on Friday. On Sunday, ferries run at 5:30pm and 8:30pm.

ISTANBUL-BANDIRMA: Car and passenger ferries depart from Istanbul's Yenikapi terminal every weekday at 7am and 6:30pm. Additional passenger-only ferries leave at 1pm Monday to Thursday and 5:30pm every Friday. On weekends, ferries depart at 7am and 5:30pm. The ferry, which takes two hours, is a good choice if you want to drive to Çanakkale, Troy and Gallipoli.

ÇANAKKALE-ECEABAT: Services run from 4am until midnight every day and the journey takes 30 minutes. Ferries leave Eceabat every hour on the hour; they depart from Çanakkale every hour on the half-hour. Ferries are for cars and foot passengers.

ÇANAKKALE-GOKCEADA, KABATEPE-GOKCEADA: Services to the island of Gokçeada are not as frequent as those to neighboring Bozcaada. The Çanakkale connection runs once a day at 5pm every Monday and Friday. From Kabatepe, there are two ferries at 11am and 6pm, with an additional evening service at 8pm every Friday.

BY TRAIN

Trains run from Istanbul's Sirkeci Station to **Edirne** every day. Local trains depart at 3:50pm and reach Edirne at 9:16pm. They have first- and second-class seats. The Bosfor train runs from Istanbul to **Bucha-**

rest, passing through Edirne. Trains depart at 9:16pm and arrive at 2:34am.

TRAVEL AROUND TOWN

BY TAXI & *DOLMUS*

Taxis are cheap and drivers are required by law to use their meters. Taxis can be hailed on the street or picked up at marked stands. They can easily be found at rail, bus and ferry terminals. Drivers do not expect tips. *Dolmus* minivans connect towns and villages across the region. Regular *dolmus* services operate between towns and historical sites from spring to fall. Less frequent services are available in winter.

SIGHTSEEING

EDIRNE

© Piotr Tysarczyk

Edirne Tower

Edirne is really two cities. There is the modern border-crossing town through which traffic going in and out of the country passes without much thought. Then there is the ancient city with its vernacular architecture and ruins that lie too far away for most visitors. It is one of the many places in Turkey that travelers intent on capturing the country's soul can greedily enjoy.

Edirne lies at the junction of the Tunca and Meriç rivers, which irrigate the farmland and poplar trees that surround the city. The rich farmland means the standard of living in Thrace is high. This is reflected in the smart houses known as Edirnekari. Two market areas – the Bedesten and Alipasa Çarşisi – give the city vibrancy.

Edirne was originally settled by the Thracians, who lost control of the city when its kingdom became weakened in the fourth century BC.

The Romans took control and the city flourished, becoming a military stronghold and an important trading point. It was even renamed **Hadrianopolis** (also known as Adrianopolis) after the Roman Emperor Hadrian. The Byzantines claimed the city following the division of the Roman Empire.

The city fell to the Ottomans in 1361 and its name was changed to Edirne. It served as the second capital of the Ottoman Empire until the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Even then, the city retained its importance.

© Nevit Dilmen

During the first half of the 18th century, Edirne was the seventh-largest city in Europe. It was graced with fine mosques, Turkish baths and caravanserais.

The sultans spent much of their time in the palace here, which was said to have been as grand as Topkapi. Unfortunately, little remains of the palace today. They also built magnificent mosques, religious schools and other imperial public buildings.

Edirne was ravaged twice, first by a fire in 1745 and then by an earthquake in 1751, and rapidly went into decline. By the early 19th century, its role was relegated to one of fractious border town. It was briefly captured by the Russians in 1829 and was reclaimed only after a peace treaty was signed that greatly weakened the Ottoman Empire. The Greeks occupied the city from 1919-1923 in the wake of World War I.

SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (★) are worth a visit. Two stars (★★) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (★★★), just do it. You won't be sorry.

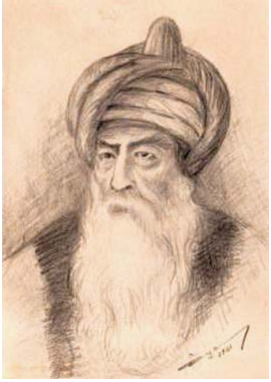
SELIMIYE MOSQUE ★★

Set in the neighborhood of Faith, Selimiye is the focal point of the city and the main reason to visit. Its location was chosen because it was the least accessible area of the city, with the Kyrk Merdiven cliffs on one side and a deep cistern on the other. The mosque was commissioned by Sultan Selim II and built by Sinan between 1569 and 1575. Its vast complex is reached through pretty gardens. Within the walls are a *medrese*, or religious school, now housing a small Turkish & Islamic Arts Museum (open Tuesday to Sunday, 8am-12pm, 1pm-5pm). There is also a timekeeper's room and an *arasta*, or row of shops. The mosque has a series of small domes that lead the eye to a giant central dome measuring 31.5 m/103 feet in diameter. Sinan chose the design to create the feeling of an enormous amount of light and space. The mosque is considered to be Sinan's masterpiece.

SINAN: THE MASTER BUILDER

Mimar Sinan's great designs are exhibited all over Turkey. From the Süleymaniye Camii in Istanbul (shown at right) to his masterpiece, the Selimiye Camii in Edirne, Sinan was synonymous with Ottoman architectural design when it was at its zenith. His genius is evident not only in the 400 buildings he was charged with designing and constructing, but also in the tombs, bridges and mosques built by later architects who were influenced by his experimental style. For 50 years, Sinan was Chief Architect to the Ottoman Empire.

The acclaim Sinan achieved in the Ottoman court could not have been predicted. Sinan's heritage has been hotly contested by academics. Was he Greek or Armenian? It is known he was a Christian born to Greek or Armenian parents in a village in the province of Kayseri, in Central Anatolia. And while Armenians had a reputation as master craftsmen, so did the Greeks. The answer to the puzzle became academic when Sinan was enrolled in the Janissary Corp and converted to the Islamic religion.



Mimar Sinan

Sinan, like his father, trained as a carpenter, though he acquired his knowledge from the Acemi Ocagi, a palace school. The exact dates of Sinan's birth and his enrolment are not known, but it is believed he was born around 1498 or 1499 and that he joined the Janissaries between the ages of 14 and 18. He joined the engineering corp and took part in military campaigns in Belgrade, Rhodes, Vienna, Persia and Baghdad. He demonstrated his prowess as an engineer and builder working on a grand scale. His skill for building ships and great bridges was rewarded with promotion to Sergeant at Arms. Sinan won further acclaim during the Moldovian campaign, when he built a much-needed bridge in a very short time. During this period, the court's Chief Architect died and Sinan was appointed to replace him.

Sinan's Strive for Excellence

The early 16th century was a period of great expansion for the Ottoman Empire. It broke out of the confines of Anatolia and the Balkans, pushing into new territories and forcing the world to recognize it as a great power. The new territories brought enormous wealth and spurred architectural projects in Constantinople, the capital of the empire, and in other cities. Sinan was fortunate to have great financial resources with which to experiment and perfect his art.

Sinan was rarely satisfied with his constructions. He was always striving to improve and innovate, and he constantly sought solutions to the problems of space, mass and, in particular, how to create great domes that appeared to be free of ugly buttresses. Sinan studied and was influenced by the architecture of the countries he traveled to while in the army. He was particularly driven to surpass the great dome in the Aya Sofya. Of the hundreds of civic and Islamic buildings he designed, Sinan said his entire career can be encapsulated into three buildings: "I showed that I was an apprentice with the Sehzade Mosque, an able contractor with the Süleymaniye Mosque and an expert with the Selimiye Camii," he said.

Sinan still considered himself an apprentice when he was in his 50s. He died in 1588. His mausoleum lies in the garden of the Süleymaniye Mosque close to that of Süleyman the Magnificent.

KALEIÇI

Narrow streets with old houses and new cafés line the Kaleiçi district of Edirne. Life has remained largely untouched here for generations. The 15th-century Bedesten, once a hub for cotton and silk tradesmen, still serves as Edirne's market place. Shops sell hand-made embroidery, books and scented soaps. Try the crumbly feta cheese or drink a glass of *hardaliye*, grape juice mixed with mustard and marzipan. Both are local specialties, though one is more palatable than the other.

Behind the Bedesten is **Rustem Paşa Hani**, a grand caravansary built a century after the market. It provided accommodation and stabling for merchants and travelers. It was built by Mimar Sinan for Süleyman the Magnificent's Grand Vizier Rustem Paşa.

The **Eski Camii**, or Old Mosque, is a squat structure topped by nine domes. Although the Ottomans built the structure in 1403, it more closely resembles Seljuk style. The mosque has an interesting history. Following the death of Sultan Beyazit I at the hands of Tamerlane, one of his three sons, Süleyman started work on the building. A bitter war erupted with Süleyman and his brother. When they were both killed, the third brother, Sultan Mehmet I, completed the mosque.

WARNING: The areas north of Edirne along the border have become lawless with illegal immigration and smuggling. Unless you are using this as a route to drive into Turkey, it is best to avoid the area.

BEYAZIT II KULLIYESI

Take a *dolmus*, or shared taxi, to the countryside of Edirne where the Beyazit II Kulliyesi sits on a remote stretch of farmland. The complex was built in 1484-5 by Beyazit II and comprises a mosque, hospital, medical school, religious school, soup kitchen and *hamam.*

> *It was at the hospital that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu took the revolutionary step of having her children inoculated against smallpox, a virtually unknown practice in Europe.*

© Nevit Dilmen

Ottoman hospital, Edirne

The hospital's hexagonal-shaped treatment room had domed alcoves where the patients, some of whom were mentally ill, were soothed by the sounds of music and water. Bizarrely, it was a popular place for the wealthy youth of Edirne to spend their time. The hospital is now a museum (open Tuesday to Sunday 9am-5pm, entrance fee) with ethnographical wax dummies showing how treatments were administered. The complex pays testament to the medical advances made during the Ottoman Empire.

THE ROAD TO GALLIPOLI

There are two possible routes south from Edirne. The first follows E-87 down to the beautiful but tragic Gallipoli Peninsula through the fishing town of Gelibolu. The second route retraces E-80 into Istanbul. From Istanbul, you can take the fast ferry to Yalova on the Sea of Marmara and make your way to Gallipoli via the Ottoman towns of Iznik and Bursa. If you opt for the second route, take one of the hourly car ferries that skim the Dardanelles from Çanakkale to Eceabat.

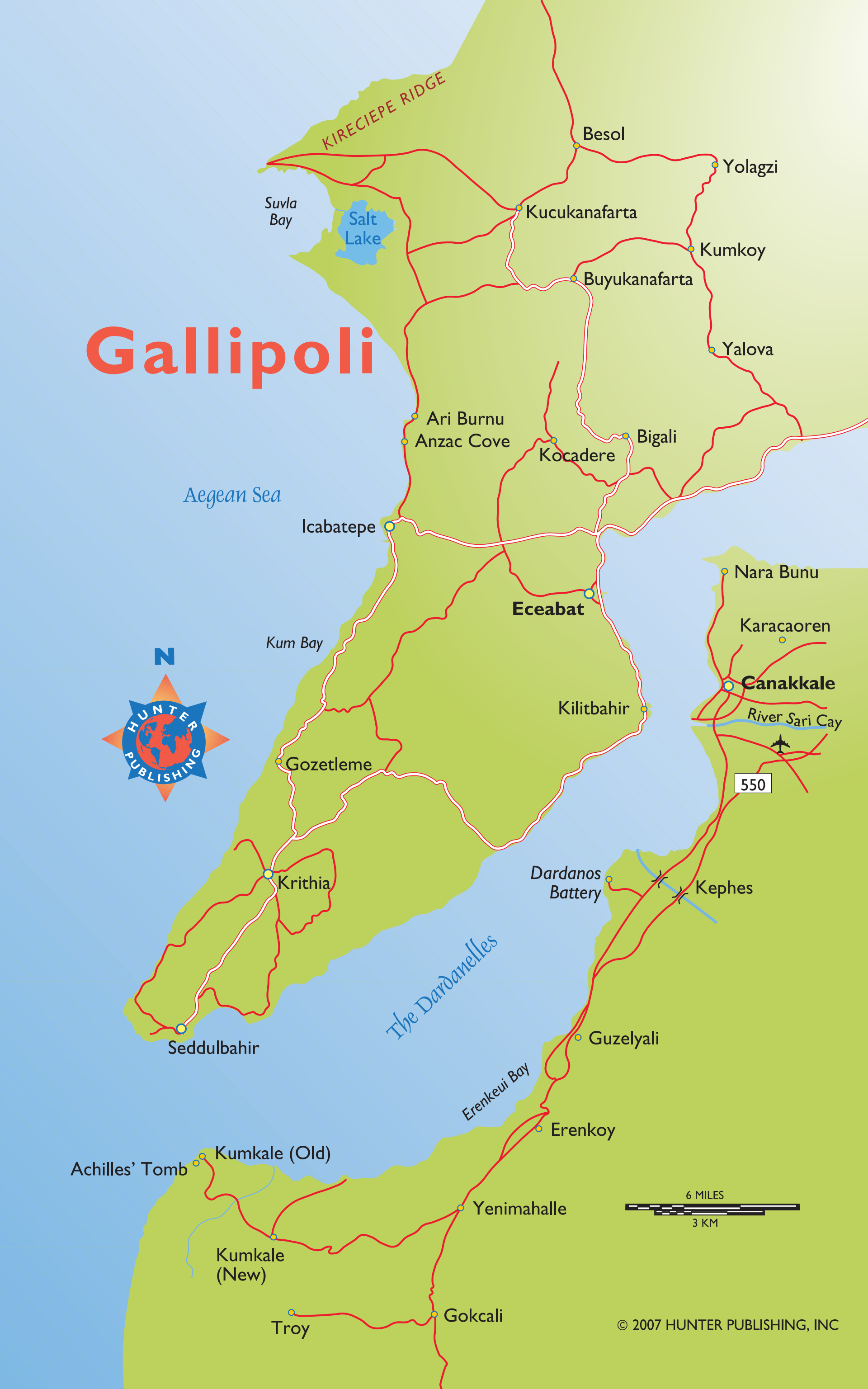
If you have time, take the Silivri exit off E-80 and follow the coast road past Tekirdağ to Kumbağ. The stretch of coastline between Kumbağ and Sarkoy has some wonderful beaches lined up in front of pine forests. You will notice that the hills are covered in vineyards. This is Turkey's best wine region.

GELIBOLU PENINSULA HISTORICAL NATIONAL PARK (GALLIPOLI) ☆☆☆

It is one of the most stunning stretches of coastline in Turkey, a national park brimming with pine forests that cover the remains of the Allied and Turkish soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the First World War. About 500,000 soldiers are estimated to have died or been wounded here. Most of the bodies were not retrieved until the Armistice with Turkey in 1918 when the British re-entered the peninsula.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Gallipoli Peninsula


Gallipoli
KIRECIEPE RIDGE
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Salt Lake
Kucukanafarta
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Ari Burnu
Anzac Cove
Bigali
Kocadere
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Guzelyali
Erenkeui Bay
Erenkoy
Kumkale (Old)
Achilles' Tomb
Yenimahalle
6 MILES
3 KM
Kumkale (New)
Troy
Gokcali

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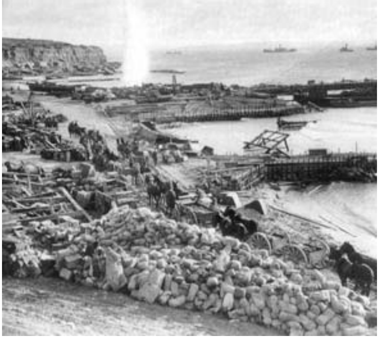
Churchill, as First Lord fo Admiralty in 1912

Allied troops, under the auspices of First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, conspired to take control of the Dardanelles, a narrow straight between Asian and European Turkey. They believed that conquering Constantinople would force Turkey out of the war and create a passage through to Russia that was free of ice. The campaign began with an attempt to force through the strait with naval power alone. It failed and on March 18 1915, allied forces lost three battleships to Turkish mines.

A 70,000-strong force of British, Anzac, Indian and French troops were commanded to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula. The attack was launched on April 25, 1915. Allied troops made two fatal miscalculations: they did not foresee the hostile terrain with steep cliffs overhanging the beaches, nor did they anticipate the cunning of Mustafa Kemal and the bravery of his troops. Both sides dug in for a battle that was to last nine months.

At the narrowest points on the peninsula, troops faced each other across trenches that were just eight m/26 feet apart.

The failed offensive by Allied troops was blamed on poor coordination and leadership by General Sir Ian Hamilton, who chose to command the operation from aboard a ship. In the end, dysentery caused by the heat and, later, frostbite proved as deadly as the Turks. The failure of the campaign led Churchill to leave his post.



Cape Helles Beach, 1916

Driving along the coast road from the French and British landing points at Cape Helles in the south to Anzac Cove, with its empty shingle beaches and hills covered with wildflowers, it is difficult to imagine the torment that the young soldiers faced on the peninsula.

On April 25 each year, relatives of those who died at Gallipoli travel thousands of miles to gather for the Dawn Service before wandering around the graves and memorials. The 92nd anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign was marked in 2007. If you plan to join the Anzac Day commemoration, book your accommodation and tour well in advance.

There are cemeteries and memorials scattered throughout the area and it takes a whole day to explore them. Getting around them is difficult without a car because public transport is limited. You can take a tour with one of the agencies in Istanbul or Çanakkale, or hire a car and tour independently.

The **Kabatepe Information Centre and Museum** (☎ 0286-8141297, open Tuesday to Sunday 8am-5pm, entrance fee), on the west of the peninsula, is one of the main starting points for tours. The museum has a collection of uniforms, guns and spent bullets used by French, Australian, Turkish and British forces. The most moving exhibition is in the foyer, which displays photographs of old soldiers reunited during Anzac Day memorials in Gallipoli. **Camburnu National Park and Visitors Centre**, one km/.6 miles south of Eceabat, is another good starting point for information and maps of the memorials.

The term Anzac was derived from the Australian and Kiwi forces that volunteered to fight for the British Empire during World War I. After being trained in Egypt, the forces were joined into the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, hence the acronym ANZAC.

RECOMMENDED TOUR COMPANIES

TJs Anzac Gallipoli Tours (☎ 0286-8143121, www.anzacgallipolitours.com) is owned by a Turkish-Australian couple who have been operating tours of the battlefields for nine years. Their five-hour Gallipoli Peninsula tour visits 10 memorials and cemeteries. If you have connections here, you can even ask for a specific grave to be researched and located.

Holts Tours (☎ 01293-455300 in the UK, www.holts.co.uk) specializes in battlefields. The five-day Gallipoli tour includes three days exploring the beaches of Helles, Anzac and Suvla, where the main landings took place.

On the Go Tours (☎ 0207-3711113 in the UK, www.onthegotours.com) has several Anzac Day packages, including a three-day trip that takes in the Anzac Dawn Service. Good for budget travelers.

ANZAC COVE & SUVLA BAY

The most famous battlefield was at Ari Burnu on the west of the peninsula. Before dawn on April 25, 1915, soldiers leapt from small boats aiming for the beaches. But they had overshot their planned landing beach by two miles and many died in the deep waters under the weight of their packs. Those who made it to shore faced heavy fire from Turkish soldiers led by Mustafa Kemal on the steep cliffs above. The troops were forced to dig in. They made a brave, but unsuccessful attempt to link Suvla with Anzac. In December of that year, General Sir Ian Hamilton was replaced by Sir Charles Monro, who immediately ordered the soldiers be evacuated. This was, ironically, the most successful part of the whole campaign.

© Samantha Lafferty

The cove where the soldiers landed was renamed Anzac in 1985. There is a marble memorial above the beach (shown here), called the Turkish Memorial, with an inscription written by Atatürk to the mothers of the fallen allied soldiers. It reads:

Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives,
You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country.
Therefore rest in peace.
There is no difference between the Johnnies
and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side
in this country of ours.
You the mothers, who sent their sons from
faraway countries, wipe away your tears;
Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace.
After having lost their lives on this land
they have become our sons as well.

ARI BURNU & BEACH CEMETERIES

Anzac Cove and the surrounding valleys have been preserved as a memorial to the men who died. The area contains 21 cemeteries and three memorials. The Ari Burnu and Beach cemeteries lie next to the Turkish Memorial above the now deserted beaches that the soldiers had landed on. The young ages inscribed on many of the graves only makes the cove's legacy more heart wrenching.

Turning inland from the coast along a road that winds high into the mountains you come to **Lone Pine Cemetery**, so called because of the single tree that grew there. It is the resting place of 1,000 soldiers, many of them Australian. Within the cemetery is a memorial to almost 5,000 soldiers whose bodies were never found.

Lone Pine Cemetery

Trench at Lone Pine

The Lone Pine position was captured by Anzac forces during the first landings, but was recaptured by the Turks on the next evening. It was considered to be the strongest position in the Turkish line but was again captured by Anzac forces on August 6 and held until the evacuation from the peninsula.

THE 57TH REGIMENT CEMETERY

Continue uphill from Lone Pine Cemetery to the memorial for Turkish soldiers. The names of fallen soldiers and their home towns are inscribed into long marble plaques at the bottom of a hill.

Head south back past Kabatepe to the village of **Alcitepe,** where an abandoned military base stands. Here, Alcitepe Garrison Monument pays remembrance to the 10,000 Turkish soldiers whose bodies were brought to the area by villagers and buried. To the west is the Son OK Monument, built to record the last bullet fired in the Battle of Krithia. Almost 1,000 Turkish soldiers died at this point after they ran out of ammunition and made a bayonet charge to push back the allied forces.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Reminders of fallen soldiers

The British 29th Division landed at five beaches at **Cape Helles** on the tip of the peninsula. All of these were heavily defended and troops ran into mines, machine gun fire and shellfire. Repeated attempts to reach their target of Achi Baba, a hill giving commanding views over the Helles beaches, were all in vain. Large numbers of soldiers were killed and wounded. The Helles Memorial now stands on the edge of the peninsula and acts as a commemoration for Australian, Indian and British soldiers who have no known grave. It bears over 21,000 names.

Helles Memorial

GOKÇEADA

The island of Gokçeada, the most westerly point in Turkey, can easily be reached by ferry from Kabatepe and Çanakkale. It looks barren and forlorn as you sail into the harbor. From the wharf, travel northwest to **Kale**, where there is a ruined castle built by Süleyman the Magnificent. Most of the island's hotels and restaurants are in this village.

Gokçeada was referred to as "The Island of the God of the Sea, Poseidon" by Homer in his Iliad. It served as the headquarters for allied forces during the First World War and was ceded to Turkey in 1923 under the Treaty of Lausanne. It is still fundamentally a Greek island, as evidenced by the vast number of churches and monasteries spread across the green-brown hills. Each year in mid-August there is a festival to mark the end of the Greek Orthodox month of sacrifice.

Gokçeada has several good beaches, including **Aydincik**, 13 km/eight miles from the town center. The two-km/1.2-mile stretch of sand is popular with Turkish tourists and windsurfers. Nearby is **Tuz Gölü**, a saltwater lake brimming with flamingoes, wild ducks and pelicans during the migrating season.

IZNIK

Car ferries take just over an hour to skirt across the Sea of Marmara to the spa town of **Yalova**. There are few ruins to hold visitors, though there are good thermal hotels 12 km/seven miles inland from the port in a forested area. To travel on to Iznik from Yalova, take a *dolmus* from the main road outside the ferry terminal. By car, take the road south to Orhangazi and follow the northern shore of the lake to Iznik. If you want to head straight for Bursa (54 km/34 miles from Yalova), plenty of buses running from the docks to the bus station 10 km/six miles outside of that city.

Iznik Lake Park

The lakeside town of Iznik, formerly known as Nicaea, was renowned for producing exquisite Ottoman ceramics and tiles. Iznik ceramic art reached its peak in the 16th and 17th centuries. The tiles, decorated in rich patterns and colors, were used to decorate palaces, mosques and tombs. They can still be seen in Topkapi Palace and the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. The tiles were in demand across the world and the city played an important part in the empire's trade route. The decline in the Ottoman Empire led to a dwindling demand for the expensive Iznik ceramics and, eventually, the art of producing them was lost.

Priceless Iznik tiles (image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board)

The Iznik Foundation (www.iznik.com) has rekindled the art of tile production using traditional techniques and the semiprecious quartz material. The tiles have an incredibly white base and are decorated with colors that reflect the shades of precious stones. The techniques used are complex and make the tiles extremely durable. Consequently, they are expensive. The foundation has a workshop and showroom in Iznik (Sahil Yolu, Vakif Sokak 13, ☎ 0224-7575737), as well as showrooms in Istanbul (☎ 0212-2873243) and Ankara.

ISLAMIC TREASURES

As well as ceramics, the city has several compelling Islamic monuments. The **Haci Ozbek Camii** was the first mosque built by the Ottomans in 1334. The Yeşil Camii is so called because of its green tiled minaret. Unfortunately, the tiles are not original, as these were destroyed in a fire. Opposite the mosque is the **Nilufer Hatun Imareti**, built in 1388 by Murat I for his mother. Originally used as a soup kitchen for the poor, it is now a museum exhibiting Roman and Byzantine artifacts and a small collection of Iznik tiles.

BYZANTINE SIGHTS

Iznik also contains some of Turkey's best Byzantine sights. On the edge of the lake stands the **Roman Senate** where the first Ecumenical

Council was held in 325. Pass through the giant city walls to visit the **Church of Aya Sofya** (entrance fee), parts of which date from the fourth century. There is a partially preserved mosaic floor and frescoes on the dome of the basilica. The church was the seat of the 7th Spiritual Council. The mosque was converted to the Orhan Gazi Camii when the Ottomans captured the town in 1331. The architect Sinan renovated it during the 16th century.

Take time to seek out **Lefke** and **Istanbul gates**, remarkably well-preserved entrances to the city through imposing 5,000-meter/three-mile-long walls. The walls were built during the Hellenistic age and expanded by the Romans and Byzantines. They featured 114 towers and four gates, though the remaining two gates are in a ruined state.

IZNIK LAKE

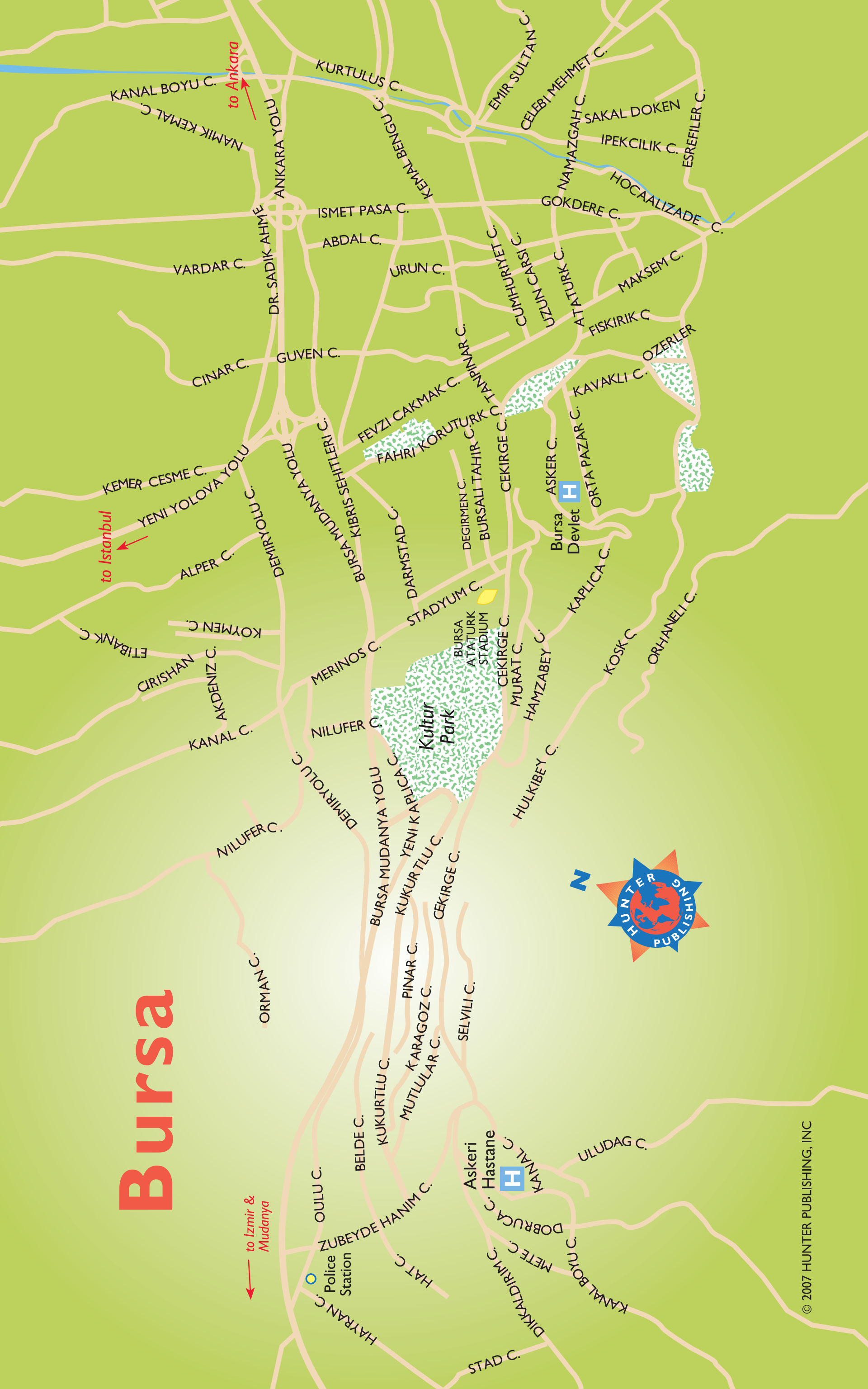
It would be a shame to spend a day in Iznik without taking time to drive or walk along the lake, which is the largest in the region. Take a picnic or stop for dinner at one of the many fish restaurants. If you prefer the coast, head west from Iznik past Gemlik to the seaside town of **Mudyana**. It is popular with Turkish tourists who visit the fishing ports to the west along a lovely stretch of coastline dotted with white sand beaches. In 1922, Turkish nationalists negotiated an armistice here with allied forces, who occupied Istanbul and Thrace, preventing further bloodshed along the coast.

BURSA

Bursa was captured from the Byzantines by Orhan Gazi in 1326 and became the first Ottoman capital. The city prospered as an economic and cultural center and underwent a building boom in the finest Ottoman style. The seat of power was later moved to Edirne, but Bursa still has an abundance of tombs, historic mosques, *medreses* (religious schools), inns that stand in grand squares, and narrow alleys enclosed by city walls.

Today, Bursa is Turkey's sixth-biggest city and home to 1.5 million people. It is a rapidly developing industrial and commercial center whose outskirts are an ugly tangle of factories and car dealerships. A ride in the rickety cable car to nearby Uludağ National Park (see *Adventures of Foot*, page 202) shows the ever-bulging city limits. Its claim to be Yeşil Bursa, or Green Bursa, has long been lost.

In spite of the sprawl on the outskirts, Bursa still manages to be engaging. Its list of historical attractions could easily overwhelm even the


Bursa
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ANKARA YOLU
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GUVEN C.
FEVZI CAKMAK C.
TANPINAR C.
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ALPER C.
KAPLICA C.
STADYUM C.
BURSA ATATURK STADIUM
KOYMEN C.
ETIBANK C.
MERINOS C.
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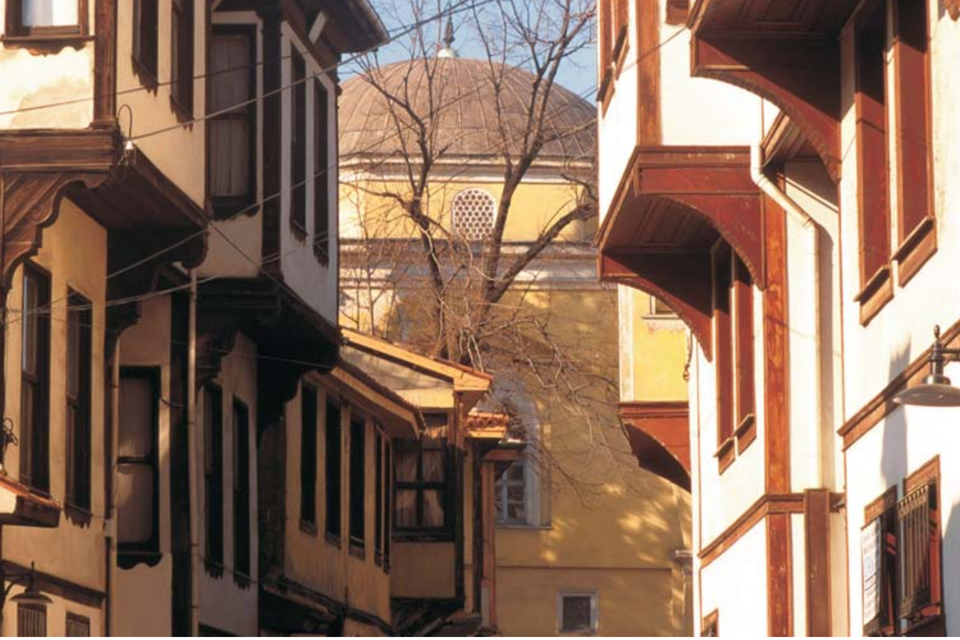


Old houses in Bursa (image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board)

hardiest traveler. Plan to spend a day or two in the city to visit the main sites and still have time to indulge in the hot spring baths and taste the famous Tarhana soup and candied chestnuts.

> **TIP:** *Bursa is an easy city to navigate, though the distances between the sites could mean a long day of walking or a few taxi rides. Cekirge marks the western end of the downtown area and the Yesil Camii, or Green Mosque, is to the east. To find your way around, use Heykel, the statue of Atatürk on horseback, and the Zafer Plaza in the center as markers.*

THE GREAT MOSQUES

The Ulu Cami, or **Grand Mosque**, stands on Atatürk Caddesi in the center of town. Built at the end of the 14th century, this great hulk of a structure dominates everything around it. The mosque has 20 domes supported by a series of pillars that divide the space within the building. Beneath the central dome is a serene tiered ablutions pool (shown here).

© Vcrs

Yesil Camii

Bursa, like Iznik, has a beautiful Yeşil Camii, or **Green Mosque**, built by order of Sultan Mehmet I. The mosque, which stands on a hillside east of the Ulu Camii at the end of Yeşil Caddesi, marked the culmination of his decade-long struggle to take the throne. Mehmet I was the second founder of the Ottoman state after he reestablished the empire following the invasion of the Mongolians in the 15th century. The exterior of the mosque is marble. Inside, it is almost palatial, with brilliant green, turquoise, blue and white Iznik tiles, carvings and the ablutions fountain in the center made from a single piece of stone.

Mehmet I's extraordinary turquoise-tiled tomb (open daily 8:30-12pm, 1pm-5pm) lies in a garden across the road from the mosque.

Continuing the tour of Bursa's mosques, the **Orhan Gazi Camii** (opposite the municipal building) was built between 1339 and 1340. It has a grand columned entrance, yet inside, it is remarkably unpretentious.

Northeast of Yeşil Camii, on Yildirim Caddesi, is **Yildirim Bayezit I Camii**, an early example of the design that came to characterize Ottoman mosques. It was part of a large complex that included a religious school, mausoleum and hospital. The mosque is most notable for the picturesque old houses surrounding it.

THE BAZAAR QUARTER

Behind the Ulu Camii is a tangle of streets that make up the **Çarşi**, or bazaar quarter, founded by Orhan Gazi in the 14th century. The market quarter stretches from Cumhuriyet Caddesi in the north to Atatürk Caddesi in the south. The vibrant stalls in the outdoor market take on a surreal glow in the early evening light. In the center of the district is the **Koza Han** (open 8:30am-7pm), or silk manufacturers' bazaar, built at the end of the 15th century. Bursa was the center of Turkey's silk trade and silk cocoons were brought here from China. The Koza Han caravansary was one of the most westerly stops on the Silk Road and must have sold some exotic wares. As well as silk fabric,

Opposite: Colorful Ottoman tomb, Bursa (image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board)

Bursa produced silk thread for the exquisite Hereke silk carpets. Koza Han is still dominated by silk and brocade merchants selling pashminas, scarves and fabrics from their stalls around the courtyard. An interesting miniature octagonal pavilion stands on pillars above a fountain in the courtyard.

Bursa's oldest inn is the **Emir Han**, built by Sultan Orhan in the mid-14th century. In between Koza Han and Emir Han is a vaulted street of shops known as the **Kapalicarsi**, or **Covered Bazaar**. The bazaar has been in existence since the quarter was built, but it was badly damaged by numerous fires and only one street remains. Nearby, the two-storied **Bedesten market** was built to store goods. Rows of shops enveloped the outside of the inn. Today, the Bedesten (open 8:30am-7pm) sells jewelry and textiles. Revenue from the Bedesten was used to fund the nearby Orhan Gazi Camii and the Ulu Camii.

CEKIRGE

The western suburb of Cekirge is the smartest area of Bursa and has lots of thermal hotels. The area has been praised since Roman times for its hot mountain springs rich in magnesium, sulphur, calcium, iron and sodium. They are used for treating dermatological and gynaecological ailments. **Eski Kaplica** (Old Spring), which sits on the site of the original Byzantine baths, is the oldest and the best *hamam*. Nearby **Yeni Kaplica** was built in 1552 by Rustem Paşa, the Grand Vizier of Süleyman the Magnificent. There is an abundance of quality hotels offering spa facilities. The most famous is **Celik Palas Oteli**, with its marble pool, Turkish bath and sauna. It has been the haunt of kings and queens.

The **Muradiye complex** (open daily 8:30am-5:30pm in summer, closes at 5pm in winter) is south of Cekirge Caddesi and the Kültür Parki. Within the complex is a cemetery where Ottoman sultans, princes and princesses were buried in a poetic garden with plane trees, magnolias and roses. There are 21 tombs in all, 11 of them built for members of the Ottoman royal family.

Next to the cemetery is the 15th-century **Muradiye Camii**. From here, walk up Kaplica Caddesi to the **Hisar**, or Citadel, for the mausoleums of Osman Gazi and his son Orhan, founders of the Ottoman State. Their tombs lie in the grounds of a ruined Byzantine church. The terrace behind the tombs gives a magnificent view of their captured territory.

BURSA FOR FAMILIES

Keeping your family entertained should not be difficult in Bursa, a city that puts emphasis firmly on fun. Aside from the puppet plays (see below), there are few cultural activities for children.

Rainbowl (As Merkez Shopping Center, ☎ 0224-2615640, open 10am-2am) is a well-equipped bowling alley with a restaurant. There are discounts for games on weekdays and before 6pm.

Bursa Culture Park Zoo (also known as Soğanli Hayvanat Bahçesi) Yakin Cevre Yolu, Soğanli, Osman Gazi, ☎ 0224-2112831. Bursa Culture Park Zoo is the biggest zoo in Turkey and the second-largest in Europe. There are demonstrations and seminars on wildlife for children and a model village where they can pet and feed farm animals.

Bursa Botanical Gardens, Yakin Cevre Yolu, 2. Kilometre, Soğanli, Osman Gazi, ☎ 0224-2114213 (free), is 100-acre park located next to the Bursa Culture Park Zoo. Among the attractions are Japanese, French and English gardens. The park has walking and cycling trails.

SHADOW PUPPET PLAYS

According to Turkish folklore, Karagoz and his friend Hacivat were employed as workmen in the construction of Bursa's Ulu Camii. Their satirical jokes made the sultan anxious that they would provoke an outcry about the abuses of the state, so they were condemned to death.

The construction of the mosque was completed without them, but their comrades kept their memories alive by retelling their jokes over and over. In time, the adventures of Karagoz and Hacivat were embellished and the stories turned into plays now known as Turkish shadow puppet theater.

Shadow puppets cut from camel hide and painted to look like Karagoz and Hacivat are held against a wide white cloth and operated as a strong light shines from behind. You can see plays at the Karagoz Theatre and Museum (Cekirge Caddesi 3, open Tuesday-Saturday noon-5pm) More information is available at the Karagoz Antique Shop (Eski Aynali Çarşi 12). The shop owner, Sinasi Celikkol, organizes shadow puppet theater plays and has replicas of Karagoz and Hacivat for sale.

EXCURSIONS FROM BURSA

Cumalikizik

Cobblestoned street, Cumalikizik

Cumalikizik was one of the first places settled by the Ottomans when they moved to Bursa. The 700-year-old village, on the lower slopes of Mount Uludağ, has hundreds of traditional Ottoman houses along narrow streets with no sidewalks. Some of them have rekindled their former splendor, though many more are in a tumbledown state. You can shop for homemade food, fruit and handicrafts at the makeshift stalls set up by villagers. Visit the 300-year-old **Cumalikizik Camii** for its beautiful wood carvings. Cumalikizik is 12 km/7.5 miles from Bursa and can be reached by bus from the city's main *otogar* (bus station). By car, follow E-90 east in the direction of Inegol.

Golyazi

This fishing village sits in the middle of Ulubat Gölü lake, west of Bursa. The village, which is connected to the mainland by a bridge, has lots of crumbling Greek houses and cafés. Most of the inhabitants are fishermen and life here is delightfully slow. The sunsets are the village's real attraction, especially for photographers.

ÇANAKKALE

The region of Çanakkale has long been synonymous with war and tragedy. According to mythology, the children of King Athamas, Phryxus and Helle, were sent away by their stepmother on a flying ram with a golden fleece. While flying over the water, Helle fell off the ram and drowned, giving foundation to the name Hellespont. The Strait was the starting point for Alexander the Great's conquests in 384BC.

Kilitbahir

Çanakkale itself was founded by Mehmet the Conqueror in the 15th century. He built fortresses on both banks of the strait at Kilitbahir and Cimenlik to control the flow of ships through it as he plotted to capture Constantinople. The stronghold of Kilitbahir, which is illuminated at night, can be seen from the harbor at Çanakkale. Cimenlik is now a military museum dedicated to the First World War.

Çanakkale is a good base for visiting the cemeteries at Hellespont and the rest of the Gallipoli Peninsula, and the ruins of Troy 30 km/19 miles away. Both can be visited from Çanakkale with an overnight stay.

Two of the Seven Wonders of the World are in Turkey: the Temple of Artemis and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.

HOLLYWOOD HORSE

© Samantha Lafferty

Hollywood's horse used in the film Troy

Çanakkale and its waterfront have been spruced up in recent years in an attempt to improve its seedy image. There are plenty of hotels and restaurants, though the town itself is short of sites to hold visitors for more than a couple of hours. The most impressive is the giant wooden horse used in the blockbuster film *Troy*, starring Brad Pitt. The horse stands in the harbor, dwarfing the myriad of fishing boats moored there. The Hollywood construction makes the horse that guards the entrance to the ancient city of Troy look even more sad and weather-beaten.

At the opposite end of the stone promontory, past the clock tower in Saat Kulesi Meydani, is a **Naval Museum** (open 9am-5pm Tuesday to Sunday, entrance fee). On the outskirts of Çanakkale, on the way to Troy, is an **archaeology museum** (Barbaros Mahallesi 100, Yil Caddesi, ☎ 0286-2176565, open 9:30-5pm Tuesday to Sunday, entrance fee), which has some uninspiring displays of pottery and tombstones. There are plans to move the museum to a more prominent building.

> **TIP:** *Buses run from Çanakkale to the ancient city of Troy from the bridge at Koprubasi. By car, follow E-87 south of Çanakkale for 30 km/19 miles to the village of Tevfikiye.*

TROY

THE LEGEND OF TROY

Immortalized in Homer's poems *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, the passion that erupted between Helen and Paris ignited a war that devastated a civilization. Troy was a prosperous kingdom ruled by King Priam. The epic begins with a dispute between goddesses at a wedding. Eris, who had not been invited, stormed into the banquet and threw down a golden apple. She said it belonged to whoever was the fairest. Three goddesses – Hera, Aphrodite and Athena – reached for the apple. A beauty contest was called and Paris, son of Priam and the most handsome man alive, was declared the judge. To win his favor, Hera vowed to give him power, Athena pledged to provide him with wealth, and Aphrodite promised the most beautiful woman in the world would be his. Paris picked Aphrodite and she, in turn, said that Helen, the wife of Melenaus, would be his wife.

Paris set sail for Sparta to capture Helen. Once there, Melenaus treated Paris as a royal guest. However, when Melenaus was called away, Helen fell in love with Paris and they eloped, fleeing with much of her husband's wealth. Paris and Helen were later married in Troy.

On his return, Melenaus was outraged and believed Paris had abducted Helen. He called upon all of Helen's former suitors, who had long ago vowed to defend her honor, and set sail for Troy. Finding the city proved difficult and the Greeks at first landed in the wrong place. After they eventually reached Troy, Melenaus demanded that Helen and the treasure be returned. King Priam refused and Melenaus returned to his ship to declare war.

HERCULES' BOW

For nine years, the war flared with the Greeks destroying many of Troy's allies and winning several important battles. During the fighting, Paris was mortally wounded by Philoctetes, a reluctant participant in the war after Odysseus and Menelaus left him on a Greek island when he suffered a vile snakebite. Philoctetes was persuaded by Hercules to join the fighting and the hero gave Philoctetes his bow. It was with Hercules' bow that Philoctetes fired the deadly arrow.

Paris begged the nymph Oenone, the wife he abandoned for Helen, to heal him. But she refused to forgive him and Paris returned to Troy to die. Regretting her decision, Oenone followed Paris with an antidote to heal him. But she was too late and hanged herself in grief.

In spite of their victories, the Greeks still could not break the impregnable walls of Troy. The Greek warrior Odysseus had a cunning strategy. He ordered a large wooden horse to be built with the center hollowed out so men could hide inside.

Once the horse was constructed, a number of Greek warriors climbed inside. The rest of the Greek fleet sailed away to deceive the Trojans into believing they had fled. When the Trojans came to admire the horse, which had been taken to the gates of Troy, the remaining Greek soldier, Sinon, pretended to be angry with his comrades. He assured the Trojans that the horse would bring them luck.

The Trojans dragged the horse into the city walls and celebrated what they thought was their victory. Later that evening, while the Trojans lay in a drunken stupor, the Greeks emerged from the horse,

© Samantha Lafferty

The shabby horse at Troy

opened the gates for their fellow soldiers, and slaughtered their enemies. Priam was killed as he huddled by the Zeus altar. Melenaus had planned to kill his faithless wife, but was so besotted with Helen's beauty he spared her life.

Controversy and doubt have surrounded the legend of Helen and Paris. Was there really a 10-year Trojan War that was won following the construction of a wooden horse? Manfred Korfmann, the archaeologist now in charge of excavations, said in 2004 there is evidence of battles at Troy and in the surrounding area. It is less clear whether there was a single Trojan War, Korfman said.

THE MANY LAYERS OF TROY

Troy is unusual in that it was continuously inhabited from the time it was built in 3000BC to its demise in 1350AD. It was constructed, destroyed and rebuilt on the same site nine times. (Generally, when battles, earthquakes or fires ravaged cities, they would be rebuilt in a new location.)

The region surrounding Troy was known as Troas and excavations suggest there was settlement in Troas long before Troy was built. There was a village at Troas in 4800BC. The inhabitants were involved in agriculture, bred sheep, fished and produced ceramics and copper.

By 3000BC, the foundations of Troy I were laid. The city was guarded by walls and had two towers. Its fortress was built 400 years before the construction of the Pyramids in Egypt. When the original city was destroyed, Troy II was built on a larger scale on the site of its predecessor. On the new site, the houses were larger and featured central halls containing hearths. Their dilapidated walls can still be seen.

Archaeologists believe Troy II was destroyed by fire, probably after being invaded. In the years that followed (1800-220BC), the inhabitants of Troy did not attain the same rich culture as Troy II. According to Homer, invaders destroyed Troy VI. However, archaeologists now believe that an earthquake leveled the city.

The Trojans quickly rebuilt their city, only to be subjected to the cunning of the Greeks and their wooden horse. The Greeks massacred the population of Troy VII and torched everything in sight. During the Hellenistic period, Troy once again rose from the ashes. The Romans, who were drawn to the area because they believed they were descendants of the Trojan Aeneas, erected the final city, Troy IX.

THE EXCAVATION OF TROY

A young Schliemann

The early excavations at Troy were really a treasure hunt by **Henrich Schliemann**, a German who dreamed of finding the treasure of Priam, King of Troy. When he was seven, Schliemann's father gave him a copy of Jerrer's *Illustrated History of the World* for Christmas and schooled his son in Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey.* To Schliemann, Troy was more than a fabled city and he pledged to make the world believe it too.

Schliemann's childhood was plagued by poverty and tragedy. His mother died when he was nine years old and he was removed from the privileged school he attended after his father was accused of embezzling church funds. He had a colorful youth, working as a cabin boy. The ship's voyage to Venezuela was a disaster. The ship foundered in a gale and the survivors were washed up on the shores of the Netherlands.

The young Schliemann then worked for various financial and export companies in the Netherlands and in St. Petersburg. He went to California during the gold rush and opened a bank in Sacramento. The bank bought and sold over a million dollars of gold dust in six months and Schliemann made a quick fortune. The company was sold suddenly and Schliemann moved back to Russia where he met his first wife, Ekaterina.

His focus turned to making his next fortune after his wife withheld conjugal rights until he acquired more wealth. He moved into the indigo business and later sold arms during the Crimean War. Sometime between 1858 and 1863, Schliemann retired to focus on work as a classical archaeologist.

Beginning the Great Dig

Schliemann traveled widely in pursuit of ways to link his name to classical sites. He even disguised himself as a Bedouin tribesman to gain access to forbidden areas of Mecca. Then, Schliemann met British archaeologist Frank Calvert during a visit to Hisarlik. Calvert had been excavating the site for 20 years. Schliemann was convinced this was

Ancient walls at Troy

the site of ancient Troy and took over part of the excavation from Calvert. The two collaborated and used Schliemann's vast fortune to fund the dig.

By this time, Schliemann's wife had returned to Russia and they were divorced. Schliemann advertised for a new wife in an Athens newspaper. His friend, the Archbishop of Athens, recommended his relative, 17-year-old Sophie Engastromenos, and the two were married almost as soon as they met.

Schliemann spoke 13 languages, including his native German. His aptitude for learning languages helped him to understand the Iliad better. In 1871, he finally received permission to excavate the site. Schliemann was convinced that the treasures of Troy lay at the lowest level. He dug furiously through the layers, a method that led to a row with Calvert. Calvert wrote an article criticizing his partner's work, saying that relics from the Trojan War period were missing, insinuating that Schliemann had destroyed them.

By 1873, Schliemann believed he had discovered his holy grail when he saw gold remnants in the ground. He dismissed the workmen so he and Sophie could personally excavate them. Among the finds were gold chains, buttons and earrings, a gold bottle and cups, a copper shield, silver goblets and vases and gold diadems, one of them consisting of 90 chains covering the forehead.

Smuggled Relics

Schliemann and Calvert smuggled the relics out of Turkey and they were put on display in Berlin. The gold objects founds by Schliemann were later deemed to have been part of Troy II and not those of Priam. This did not stop them being sacked, this time by the Russians at the end of the Second World War. They surfaced on display at the Pushkin Museum in Russia.

The Turkish government sued Schliemann for a share of the treasure. The trial lasted a year and the Greek court found in favor of the Turks. Schliemann was ordered to pay 50,000 francs. His treasure was worth much more. In a moment of cunning, he sent items of much higher value to the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. That restored relations with the Turkish government and he was granted a new license in 1876.

Schliemann began excavations at other sites and did not return to Troy until 1878. In 1882, archaeologist Wilhelm Dorpfield joined Schliemann and taught him how to execute a scientific excavation. By this time, much of the site had already been lost.

Schliemann died in a Naples hotel room on December 26, 1890 after an illness caused by a badly infected ear. Controversy has followed him to this day. Other archaeologists have condemned his brash methods of discovery. Schliemann has been accused of exaggerating many things in his life: his university degree; his US citizenship; and a meeting in the White House with US President Millard Fillmore. His greatest crime was the fabrication of Priam's treasure. Some of the relics are said to have been found elsewhere and brought to the site. Goldsmiths are thought to have made others.

Excavations at Troy have continued over the past century. American Carl W. Blegan supervised a detailed excavation, which started in 1932 and lasted seven years. Today, German archaeologist Korfmann is continuing to work on the site.

EXPLORING THE RUINS

It takes less than a couple of hours to explore Troy (open 8am-7:30pm in summer, closes at 5:30pm in winter, entrance fee) following the way-marked route around the site. At the entrance, near the wooden horse, is a small museum depicting the history and the excavations that uncovered it.

The best-preserved ruins are those of the **Odeon**, which was used for entertainment of the masses, and the **sanctuary**, where religious and spiritual ceremonies were performed. However, without hiring a professional guide, the site requires a vivid imagination to recreate its former glory.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

GREASE WRESTLING

Every summer in **Kirkpinar**, next to the Tunca River, the slightly odd sport of grease wrestling is performed. The sport is taken very seriously and a weighty gold belt akin with those in world title boxing matches is on offer to the winner. The competition starts with the recital of a prayer for the wrestlers, before drums begin to beat and the wrestlers bow. Then, the bouts commence. Men in tight trousers and covered in olive oil – to stop their opponents getting a good grip – grapple with each other in a series of bouts to determine the champion. It is an exhausting pursuit to be champion, as each match can last from 30 minutes to several hours, depending on the stamina of the opponents. Huge crowds turn out for the three days of matches and there is a festival atmosphere. To check the dates of the competition see www.kirkpinar.com.

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON WATER

DIVING

The waters around the **Gallipoli Peninsula** are littered with the remains of more than 200 wrecks from the First World War. So much so that the area has been called "The Graveyard of the Aegean." Some of the ships have been salvaged, so the quality of some of the wrecks may be disappointing to experienced wreck divers, but fascinating to newcomers.

Sites

Cape Kücük Kemikli has a stunning seven-km/four-mile beach that provides shelter for anyone learning how to dive. Away from the shore, the strong currents and great rocks are more suited to experienced divers. The area has lots to see, including groupers and sea bream.

Cape Toplar is a good point for deep diving, down to a depth of 50 m/165 feet. Conger and moray eels, crawfish and octopuses abound on deep wall dives here.

Ibrice Harbor is another site for serious divers, with depths of 45 m/150 feet. Divers generally start from the beach or the lighthouse on the rocks next to it. At Minnos Island point, divers report a submerged world of orange corals, sea turtles, dogfish and even dolphins in the deep waters around the rocky island.

© Bougainville

Underwater life

Make a wreck dive to the ***Majestic***, which was built in 1895, making it the oldest of the British warships. Churchill had warned the ship was too old to fight in the battle to capture the Dardanelles, but his superiors sent it into the fight. It was hit by a German submarine and sunk with a crew of more than 750. The wreck, which lies at Morto Bay at the end of the Dardanelles, still has remains of its cannon and observation tower.

Allied bombers targeting German headquarters in the Cimenlik Fortress sunk a **torpedo ship** with its crew of 1,315 men. It now lies just outside the present yacht marina in Çanakkale.

Novice wreck divers can go to the wreck of ***Lundy***, a century-old ship that sank off Suvla Bay.

Dive Schools

TJs Tours (Eceabat, ☎ 0286-8143121, www.anzacgallipolitours.com), run by a Turkish-Australian couple, organizes dives to the wreck of the *Captain Franco*, a battleship that lies at the entrance to the Dardanelles.

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

HIKING

Uludağ National Park earns its crust as a winter sports center. However, there are plenty of trails through the pine forests for hiking in summer. A strenuous hike to the higher ridges affords good views towards the Sea of Marmara on a clear day. The trails are not mapped out, so the best options are to hire a guide locally or pack a good bag of supplies and take off up the slopes on your own.

© Tone

Mount Uludag

After a day of trekking around the mountain, head for one of the **Et Mangal** restaurants. They have benches outdoor with barbeques next to the tables where you can cook your own choice of steak or lamb chops.

A long ride by cable car (*teleferik*) is the best way to travel the 36 km/ 22 miles from Bursa to Uludağ National Park. There are two stops. The first is Kadiyala, on the lower slopes, where there are cafés and good hiking trails. The second stop is Sarialan for the ski slopes and hotels.

The station for the cable car is at Setbasi, east of the Heykel area of the city. It runs every hour during the week and every 30 minutes on weekends. The trip costs between $2 and $4. A *dolmus* also runs from Heykel to the park.

ADVENTURES ON SNOW

SKIING

Uludağ National Park is Turkey's largest winter sports center, a hulk of a mountain south of Bursa. The mountains are covered with pine forests and the slopes are good for Alpine and cross-country skiing. The ski season is long according to the brochures, but in reality there is good powder only between the end of December and the end of Feb-

On the slopes (image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

ruary. The snow is slushy at the end of the season. The park is the most popular of in the country because of its proximity to Istanbul and Ankara. Consequently, the facilities are excellent and the après-ski is jumping with lots of bars and nightclubs. Usually, the advantage of skiing in Turkey is the low cost. Uludag does not fit this bill; it is expensive compared with other Turkish ski resorts.

Uludağ has green- and blue-level ski runs up to an altitude of 2,232 m/7,300 feet. Beginners can take lessons and equipment can be hired. There are five chairlifts and seven T-bar lifts. The slopes can be reached on a 40-minute drive from Bursa city center or by taking the cable car (see above) to the second stop at Sarialan. An infrequent *dolmus* service runs between the cable car and the pistes and hotels.

SHOPPING

BURSA

Ozdilek Shopping Center, Yeni Yalova Yolu 4, ☎ 0224-2115244, open daily 8am-midnight. Ozdilek has been selling top-notch bed linen and towels since 1979. The mall has clothes stores, a grocery, cafés and a child care center. There is also an outlet in the Tomruk Onu Kapan Han.

The Zafer Plaza, ☎ 0224-2253900, open daily 10am-10pm (10:30pm every Friday and Saturday). The mall is set within a glass pyramid that is a stark contrast to the Ottoman and Byzantine architecture surrounding it. The 120 stores within sell Western and Turkish brands. Stores include Reebok, Mavi Jeans, United Colors of Benetton, Diesel and Koton. There are 10 restaurants, including fast food chains, and four movie theaters.

MARKETS

Bursa has a booming textile industry dating from the days when it was the final stop on the Silk Road from China. Markets and stores in the city sell wonderful silk scarves in every shade and design, as well as quality towels and bed linen. The best sources of cheap textiles are the covered markets behind the Ulu Camii. If you exhaust the markets and still cannot find what you are looking for, try one of the factory outlets. You may not be able to bargain, but the rock bottom prices mean you will not have to.

The **Bedesten market**, open 8:30am-7pm, is located behind the Ulu Camii. It sells jewelry and textiles.

Buttim Plaza, in the car park opposite Ozdilek Shopping Center (above), has a wide selection of new designer clothes and textiles sold at big discounts every Tuesday.

Koza Han, open 8:30am-7pm, is a silk bazaar that's worth a visit as much for the grand 15th-century building as it is for the dazzling array of fabrics sold from the myriad of stalls. It is the place to hunt for brightly colored scarves and fabrics.

Organize Sanayi Bölgesi, Gri Caddesi, 1 Sokak 2, sells second-hand and discounted fabrics, designer clothes and sportswear to the public at weekends. This is a factory outlet on an industrial estate.

NIGHTLIFE

In Çanakkale, **TNT**, Saat Kulesi Meydani 6, ☎ 0286-2170470, is a cocktail bar on the waterfront.

Bizz, Uludağ Sokak, Cekirge, in Bursa, offers the chance to eat great fish, drink and dance at its restaurant and disco. $$

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL PRICES

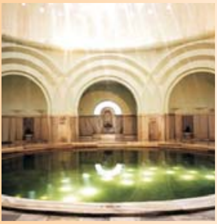
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Costs given here are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

BURSA

© Anatolia Hotel

Anatolia Hotel, Cekirge Meydani, ☎ 0224-2339400, www.hotelanatolia.com. This 95-room hotel has been completely, if unimaginatively, refurbished. It has an outdoor swimming pool and a thermal pool within a private *hamam*. Comfortable rooms have tea-making facilities and there is a bar with live music in the evening. $$$


© Celik Palas

AUTHOR PICK: Celik Palas, Cekirge Caddesi 79, Cekirge, ☎ 0224-2333800, www.celikpalasotel.com. The five-star Celik Palas is Bursa's most famous thermal spa hotel. It was built in 1935 following an order from Atatürk. The luxury spa offers a range of massages and the warm spring water claims to cure a wide array of illnesses. $$$

AUTHOR PICK: Safran Hotel, Ortapazar Caddesi, Arka Sokak 4, Tophane, ☎ 0224-2247216, safranhotel@yahoo.com, is a cute 10-room property on a pretty street in the old part of Bursa. The interior is more modern than the exterior would suggest. $$

ÇANAKKALE

Anzac Hotel, Saat Kulesi Meydani 8, Çanakkale, ☎ 0286-2177777, www.anzachotel.com. Recently renovated, the Anzac sits opposite the historic clock tower in the center of Çanakkale. The hotel has satellite TV and free Internet access. There is a rooftop terrace with views over the Dardanelles. Friendly staff. $$

Canak Hotel, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, Dibek Sokak 1, ☎ 0286-2141582, www.canakhotel.com. A 52-room hotel aimed at attracting young travelers who want more luxury than a youth hostel can offer. All rooms have a bathtub, mini-bar and balcony. There's an Italian restaurant and a rooftop bar. $$

© Canak Hotel

AUTHOR PICK: **Hotel Artur**, Cumhuriyet Meydani 28, ☎ 0286-2132000, www.hotelartur.com, is a chic option close to the harbor. It is furnished throughout with mahogany floors and cream sofas and accessories. Next door is the hotel's good Italian restaurant, which also serves as the breakfast room. $$$

© Yellow Rose Pension

Yellow Rose Pension, Kemal Paşa Mahallesi, Yeni Sokak 5, ☎ 0286-2173343, www.yellowrose.4mg.com, yellowrosepension@hotmail.com, is a backpackers' favorite. Some rooms have private showers. The pension offers vegetarian food, Internet access and a laundromat. Fez Travel, an Istanbul-based agent, operates tours of Gallipoli from the pension. $

EDIRNE

Efe Hotel, Maarif Sokak 13, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0284-2136166, www.efehotel.com, is a decent standard two-star hotel close to Edirne's *dolmus* station. The rooms are slightly dated, but they are clean and have all the essentials including satellite TV and mini-bar. There is an American-themed bar and wireless Internet. $$

© Efe Hotel

AUTHOR PICK: Hotel Rustempasa Kervansaray, Iki Kapili Han Cad. No. 57, ☎ 0284-2126119, www.kervansarayhotel.net. Rustempasa was a substantial 16th-century camel inn and warehouse before it was converted into a gorgeous hotel in 1972. There are 76 standard rooms and six suites all set around a courtyard with an old marble fountain in the center. $$

Otel Saban Acikgoz, Tahmis Meydani Cilingirler Caddesi 9, ☎ 0284-2130313, www.acikgoz.com. The 34-room hotel is perfectly situated for exploring Edirne's main sites. Parking lot. $$

GOKÇEADA

© Barba Yorgo

Barba Yorgo, Tepekoy in the center of the island, ☎ 0286-8874247, www.barbayorgo.com. There is something for all tastes at Barba Yorgo, though after an evening of reveling in the owner, George's, Greek tavern you may not care where you stay. Those who do care can choose from a selection of bungalows, houses and a guesthouse. $$

Poseidon Otel, Eski Bademli Koyu, ☎ 0286-8874619, is a spacious brick-built property with mountain and sea views. There are 11 rooms and one suite with a mini-bar and all conveniences. $$

Sahil Motel and Restaurant, Barbaros Caddesi 20, ☎ 0286-8873363. This clean and cozy motel is run by a family who give their guests a genuinely warm welcome. The rooms are spacious and some have balconies. $

Zeus Bungalow Hotel & Holiday Village, Kuzu Limani Mevkii, ☎ 0286-8873332, www.zeusotel.com, is a small resort that features an Alpine atmosphere with its seven wooden chalets. Each chalet sleeps six people. The complex has a swimming pool, restaurant and a shop selling natural homemade products. $$

© Zues Bungalow Hotel

ULUDAG

Akdogan Hotel, Inci Murat Caddesi 1, ☎ 0224-2338200, is a high standard three-star hotel with 102 elegant rooms and two restaurants. It also has a Turkish bath. $$

Grand Yazici Hotel, 1 Gelisim Bölgesi, ☎ 0224-2852050, has 230-rooms and is surrounded by a pine forest and magnificent views. The hotel has an indoor swimming pool, health club and Turkish bath. The lounges have huge open fireplaces. $$$

© Kervansaray Hotels

Kervansaray Uludağ, 1 Gelisim Bölgesi, ☎ 0224-2852187, www.kervansarayhotels.com, is part of a chain. It has 169 comfortable, if unexciting, rooms. Each has central heating, a bathtub and satellite TV. The hotel hires out ski equipment and organizes ski lessons. There is a heated swimming pool and a masseur on site to alleviate any aches following a day on the slopes. The two bars are busy during the skiing season. $$$

WHERE TO EAT

BURSA

Café Flor, Reyhan Mahallesi, Mantici Caddesi 30, has scrumptious cakes, sandwiches and every kind of coffee on the planet. $

Three-storey **Cicek Izgara**, Belediye Caddesi, ☎ 0224-2216526, has the décor and menu of a restaurant with the prices of a café. It offers Turkish home cooking and kebabs. $

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

Kitap Evi Café & Restaurant, Kavakly Mahallesi, Burc Ustu 21, ☎ 0224-2254160. This bookstore café is tucked into a plush old mansion. The garden restaurant is enclosed by stone walls and there is a fountain in the center. There is also an art gallery in the building. $$

Mahfel Mado, Mamazgah Caddesi 2, Sebasi, ☎ 0224-3268888, is a famous old café next to the river. It was used as a base for resistance fighters during the War of Independence. Sadly, the original property suffered a fire in 1999, but it has been completely restored. The food is simple (kebabs, sandwiches and ice cream), but the romantic atmosphere more than makes up for that. $$

Selale Doğa, Derekizik Koyu, Selale Mevkii, Kestel, ☎ 0224-3881250. If you want a restaurant with a view, Selale Doğa is next to a lovely waterfall. It serves BBQ meat and fish. $$

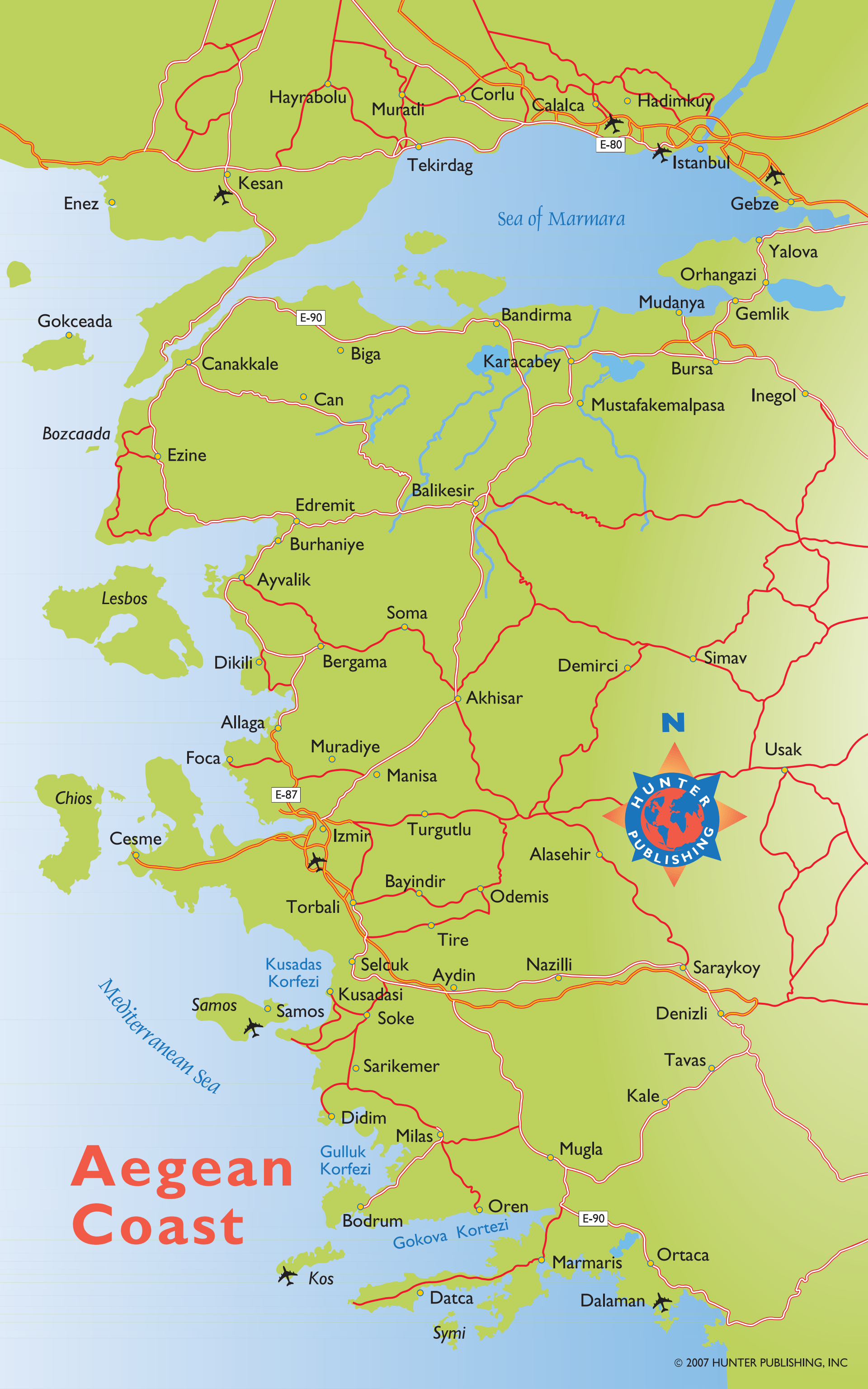
ÇANAKKALE

Cafeka, Cumhuriyet Meydani 28, ☎ 0286-2132000, www.cafeka.com, is an Italian restaurant that's part of Hotel Artur. There is a laid-back café downstairs with leather sofas and low lighting. Upstairs, the restaurant serves pizza, pasta and main courses that range from veal steak with pepper sauce to lamb with spicy potatoes. $$

Liman Yalova Restaurant, Gumruk Sokak 7, on the quayside, ☎ 0286-2171045, serves first-class Turkish fare and seafood on a terrace. $$

ECEABAT

Maydos Restaurant & Bar, west of the ferry terminal, ☎ 0286-8141454, has a private beach, but within a stone's throw of the ferries skirting across the Dardanelles. It is popular with tour groups and, consequently, has a large dining room and outdoor restaurant. Do not be put off by the tour groups; the menu is extensive with a selection of hot and cold *mezes* and grilled foods. $$



Aegean Coast

Hayrabolu
Muratli
Corlu
Calalca
Hadimkuy
E-80
Istanbul
Tekirdag
Kesan
Enez
Gebze
Sea of Marmara
Yalova
Orhangazi
Mudanya
Gemlik
Gokceada
E-90
Bandirma
Biga
Canakkale
Karacabey
Bursa
Can
Inegol
Mustafakemalpasa
Bozcaada
Ezine
Balikesir
Edremit
Burhaniye
Ayvalik
Lesbos
Soma
Dikili
Bergama
Demirci
Simav
Akhisar
Allaga
Muradiye
Foca
Manisa
Usak
E-87
Chios
Cesme
Izmir
Turgutlu
Alasehir
Bayindir
Odemis
Torbali
Tire
Kusadas Korfezi
Selcuk
Aydin
Nazilli
Saraykoy
Kusadasi
Samos
Samos
Soke
Denizli
Mediterranean Sea
Sarikemer
Tavas
Kale
Didim
Milas
Mugla
Gulluk Korfezi
Oren
Bodrum
Gokova Kortezi
E-90
Marmaris
Ortaca
Kos
Datca
Dalaman
Symi
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The Aegean Coast

The wild shores of the Aegean Coast have faced a torrent of invasions by the Greeks and Romans. A culture of marking their territories with great cities means the stretch of land from Bozcaada to Bodrum holds some of the country's most spectacular archaeological sites.

Driving down the coast from north to south, travelers first encounter Pergamon, one of greatest cities in the Hellenistic world and a center of culture, medicine and commerce. At Sardis, the ancient capital of the Lydians, you can hunt for traces of the gold that was reputed to flow down the Pactalos River.

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South of Izmir is Ephesus, one of the world's most lauded historical treasures. The vast Roman city captured the imagination of many an ancient woman. No doubt she would have dreamed of visiting the city where the men were powerful and the stores were lavish. The magnetism of Ephesus still attracts a huge crowd. Farther along the coast are the ancient cities of Priene, Miletos and Didyma, and inland are the milky terraces of Pamukkale.

Just as travelers begin to be overwhelmed by the Aegean's history lessons, they are swept along by the wilds of the landscape, which switch from forests to olive groves, sunflower fields and fruit orchards. Sandy

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Atmospheric ruins of Assos

inlets offer some respite and hillside villages tempt you with the promise of homemade wine and lazy afternoons.

North Aegean

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY AIR

Izmir Adnan Menderes Airport (ADB, ☎ 0232-2742424) is the central air traffic hub for the North Aegean. Even so, there are no direct flights from the US or Canada.

Turkish Airlines has connecting flights from New York's John F. Kennedy Airport to Izmir via Istanbul, as well as direct flights from the UK. In summer, Adnan Menderes Airport is busy with charter flights from the UK and Germany. Turkish Airlines operates domestic services to Izmir from major cities, including Ankara, Istanbul, Trabzon and Van.

The airport is located 18 km/11 miles south of the city center on the road to Selçuk and Ephesus.

GETTING TO DOWNTOWN IZMIR

The **Havaş bus** company operates services every 20 minutes from the airport to the Turkish Airlines office in the city center, opposite Hotel Grand Ephesus. The journey takes between 30 and 50 minutes and costs $6.

Lots of other buses pass on the main highway several kilometers outside the airport, but they are less convenient than the Havaş bus.

Suburban **trains** operate from the airport terminal to Izmir's Alsancak Gari via the Basmane Gari. The train takes about 30 minutes.

Taxis, widely available at the airport, will cost between $15 and $20.

MAJOR ROADS

The **E-87** runs south from Çanakkale around the Gulf of Edremit to Izmir, 325 km/200 miles away. It connects the ancient cities of Troy, Assos, Pergamon and to the south of Izmir, Ephesus. From the Bandirma ferry terminal, **D-565** passes Balikesir and Manisa on its way to Izmir.

Navigating your way around Izmir or into the city center can be hellish. The city is enclosed by an incredibly busy ring road that is less fun to drive around than any road in Istanbul.

BY TRAIN

Izmir has two railway stations: **Basmane Gari** in the city center is the terminal for intercity trains; **Alsancak** in the north has local services. Getting around the city is easy and inexpensive on suburban trains and the metro system, which runs from 6am until midnight.

Turkish State Railways (www.tcdd.gov.tr) has services connecting Istanbul's Haydarpaşa with Izmir's Basmane Gari. It is a long journey, although the overnight train will save the cost of a night's accommodation. You will need to change trains in Eskişehir. Take the Boğazici Express from Haydarpaşa at 1:30pm, arriving in Eskişehir at 6:45pm. Change to the Izmir Mavi train, which departs at 9:20pm and arrives in Izmir at 7:52am. The fare for a reclining seat on the Mavi train is $13; sleeper cars cost between $30 and $40.

The best train route between Istanbul and Izmir starts with the ferry from Istanbul to Bandirma, across the Sea of Marmara. Trains depart from the terminal daily at 4pm and arrive in Izmir's Basmane Gari at 10:39pm.

The overnight Izmir Mavi train connects Ankara with Izmir. Trains depart from Ankara at 6:10pm and arrive in Izmir's Basmane Gari at 7:52am. The fare for a reclining seat is $13; sleeper cars cost between $30 and $40.

BY BUS

Aegean coastal towns and ancient sites are well served by intercity and municipality buses. Regular buses run from Izmir to Selçuk and Ephesus, 72 km/45 miles south. To the north of Izmir, buses take about two hours to travel the 100 km/62 miles to Bergama for Pergamon.

Buses into and out of Izmir are plentiful and cheap. The bus from Istanbul to Izmir takes nine hours and the one from Ankara takes six hours. Izmir's enormous main bus station (☎ 0232-4721010) is eight km/five miles northeast of the city. Buses to Çeşme and some local services depart from Izmir's smaller Üçkuyular terminal.

BY SEA

GEYIKLI-BOZCAADA: Car and passenger ferries run from the mainland to Bozcaada five times a day on weekdays during the summer. There is an additional late-night service at weekends. In winter, there are three ferries a day. All ferries start at 7:30am. A *dolmus* service runs from Çanakkale to Geyikli, 40 km/25 miles away. The ferry takes about 30 minutes.

ISTANBUL-IZMIR: The overnight ferry between Istanbul and Izmir is operational again. It is actually more like a cruise liner than an average ferry. The service sails daily between June and September and operates in both directions every second day. It departs at 4:30pm and arrives at 9am the next day. The ferry docks at Izmir's **Alsancak Feribot Terminal** (☎ 0232-4648864), two km/1.2 miles from the city center. Cars, motorbikes and bicycles are allowed. **Anker Travel** books ferry tickets, ☎ 0256-6124598, www.ankertravel.net.

TRAVEL AROUND TOWN

Getting around Izmir by boat is easy. Eight pier terminals connect the major points of interest along the bay. Ferries take 30 minutes to run between Konak and Bostanli on the northern shore; ferries connect Konak with Alsancak in 10 minutes. Tokens can be purchased at the ferry terminals and costs less than 50 cents.

BY TAXI & *DOLMUS*

Taxis use meters to calculate fares, although you can haggle the price for long-distance trips between towns. Taxis can be hailed on the street or picked up at marked stands. They can easily be found at rail, bus and ferry terminals. Taxi drivers do not expect tips.

Dolmus minivans connect towns and villages across the region. Regular *dolmus* services operate between towns and historical sites from spring to fall. Less frequent services operate in the winter months.

SIGHTSEEING

SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (✪) are worth a visit. Two stars (✪✪) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (✪✪✪), just do it. You won't be sorry.

BOZCAADA ✪

Car ferries to Bozcaada sail at least twice a day from the Bozcaada-Yukyeri ferryboat terminal at Geyikli, 15 km/nine miles south of Çanakkale on the road to Izmir. The journey to the ferry takes you through beautiful scenery, past cotton fields and olive groves.

Bozcaada, formerly Tenedos, is the more compelling of the two Turkish islands in the Aegean Sea. Car ferries skim across the cool waters of the North Aegean in 45 minutes, docking in a small fishing harbor that is almost swallowed by a Byzantine fortress.

The castle, on a rocky outcrop in the harbor, is known as **Eski Kale**, or Old Fort, among the islanders. It was first built by Phoenicians and was enlarged by the Genoese and the Venetians. The Ottomans made the final touches, with the bulk of the rebuilding taking place in the 18th century. At night, the castle is floodlit, giving it an eerie glow.

The Greeks have had an influence in Bozcaada since Alexander the Great took control of it in 334BC. The Greeks occupied the island during the Balkan War and again from 1912 through the First World War. It was transferred back to Turkish control following the exchange of populations in 1923. Before the war, the Greeks and Turks had their own neighborhoods within a couple of streets of each other.

The island is distinctly Greek in its architecture. The lanes behind the harbor have rows of whitewashed Greek houses with decorative ironwork over the doorways and colored shutters at the windows. Vines and bougainvillea snake around their walls. Tea gardens and restaurants surround the tree-lined square south of the castle.

© Samantha Lafferty

Greek-influenced architecture, Bozcaada

BOZCAADA'S BEACHES

Bozcaada's coastline is 23 km/14 miles long, with sandy coves surrounded by grassy headlands. Sulubahce and Ayazma, in the middle of the south coast, are the busiest coves. If you prefer fewer people, travel west to Habbele or east to Akvaryum.

Bozcaada would almost be perfect if it were not for the winds. Gales rip across the hills in winter, driving most islanders away for several months. Even in summer, the winds can whip up. The island has turned this to its advantage by installing 17 wind turbines in the far northeast. The wind farm is the country's third largest and provides electricity for 30,000 people. Nearby, the pretty **Polente Lighthouse** is somewhat lost in the shade of these giants.

Bozcaada is so far from the madding crowd that the view of the night sky is staggering. There is nowhere better to watch the stars than the beach. So take a bottle of the local wine and bask in the serenity.

VINEYARDS & VINICULTURE

Wine is one of the town's main attractions. Viniculture thrives here. The narrow tarmac road that crosses the island is flanked on both sides by rolling hills covered by vineyards, with only an occasional stone house in sight.

Wine has been an important part of the island's economy since Thenes first found wild grapevines. Tenedos coins even had inscriptions of grapes on them. In more recent history, it was the Greeks who developed vineyards, with Turks staying away from alcohol for religious reasons. After the Greeks left the island, Turks turned their hands to wine-making. Now, 3.5 million liters of wine are produced each year. Economics means there are only a handful of companies on the island, although some families still make their own wine.

Each year at the end of July or beginning of August the island holds a **wine festival** to celebrate the harvest. The streets are lit by the colors of traditional costumes, dancers and tables crammed with food. And of course, the wine flows freely. Literally. Needless to say, the festival is popular, particularly with Greeks who make the excursion.

Some of the vineyards host wine tasting tours, or you can arrange your own tour of all of them. **Talay** (☎ 0286-6978080, www.talay.com.tr, info@talay.com.tr) was established by three brothers in 1948. The company hosts Vintage and Wine Tasting Tours at weekends in September and October. This includes wine tasting and a tour of island vineyards, as well as accommodation. The tour costs $155. The vineyard is also introducing week-long education programs explaining the wine-making process. **Çamlibag** (☎ 0286-6978055, www.camlibag.com, bilgi@camlibag.com) is a fourth-generation wine-maker. The company organizes customized tours.

> **TIP:** *Don't visit Bozcaada without picking up some wine. Try the 2002* ***Talay Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot*** *or the 2001* ***Çamlibag Vasilaki****. Tomato paste is another local specialty. A shop behind the castle sells nothing else.*

ÇAMLIBAĞ ŞARABI

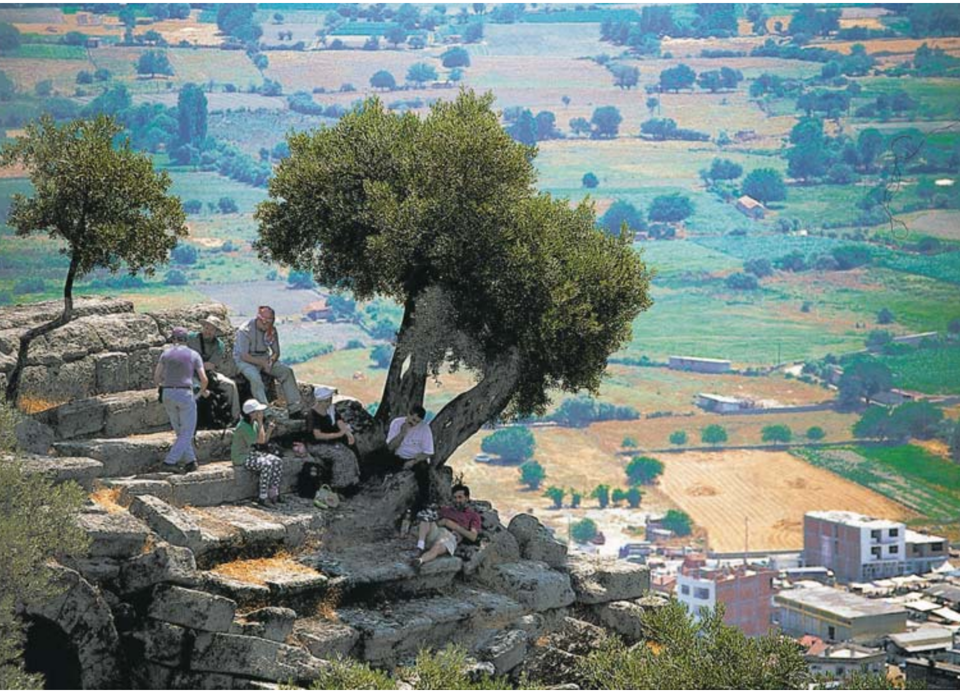
BABAKALE

Back on the mainland, a pot-holed road runs from Geyikli through olive groves and fields full of wild flowers along the coast to **Alexandria Troas** (open access). The city was founded at the end of the fourth century by one of Alexandra the Great's commanders.

In Roman times, it was a significant port town used for making the crossing from Anatolia to Rome. Constantine even considered making it the capital of the Roman Empire. St. Paul is believed to have preached at the site before making his way to Europe. Today, there are the arched remains of the largest bathhouse in Anatolia, along with a basilica. From the road, it is almost impossible to see the ruins under the vines growing across them.

Continuing south along the same road, you come to Gulpinar, where an unmarked road signposted for Apollo Smintheon leads to the ancient city of **Chryse** (open daily 9am-sunset). The site itself is far from impressive, but fans of Homer will appreciate it as being the place where the warrior Agamemnon took the daughter of the priest Chryses. The priest called on the gods and his daughter was released, but only after Agamemnon was instead given the mistress of Archilles. This sparked a feud between the two warriors that is the basis of the story of the Iliad.

The secluded village of Babakale lies at the westernmost point of Asia Minor. The views are spectacular and worth the effort of the shoddy road. Set on a rocky outcrop, its smattering of whitewashed houses look down on a well-restored castle and lighthouse. There is a handful of pensions where you can spend the night in blissful isolation.



A patchwork landscape (image courtesy Explore)

ASSOS ✯

Traveling east from Babakale is the striking village of **Behramkale** perched on a conical-shaped volcanic mound. It is surrounded by farmland and, as you approach it, the acropolis of the ancient city of Assos can be seen dominating the hillside. In the village, a narrow hairpin road, thronged by black stone houses, leads up to Assos (open daily 8:30am-sunset, entrance fee). A steep climb, past makeshift stalls set up by women selling handmade tablecloths and shawls, brings you to a mosque converted from a church and the citadel. Inside the citadel, the few remaining Doric columns of the Temple of Athena loom over the Aegean Sea. The temple was built in 530BC and dedicated to the daughter of Zeus. Athena was known both as the goddess of war and wisdom, a difficult combination. The temple was once a magnificent columned sanctuary and still evokes a mystical atmosphere as you wander around the columns and glance down the 240-m/790-

foot sheer cliff to the Aegean Sea. Across the water, the Greek island of Lesbos is almost lost in the mist.

It is no wonder Aristotle, the most famous student of the philosopher Plato, chose to spend three years at Assos. He founded a philosophy school there and carried out his early research into zoology and biology. Nowadays, the village of Behramkale attracts academics and artists from Istanbul who adore the village and its nearby wharf with its pensions and restaurants converted from chestnut storage huts. Just past the wharf, **Kadirga Cove**, a long stretch of sand, juts out into the blue sea. It is an eco-friendly area with a few environmentally-friendly hotels.

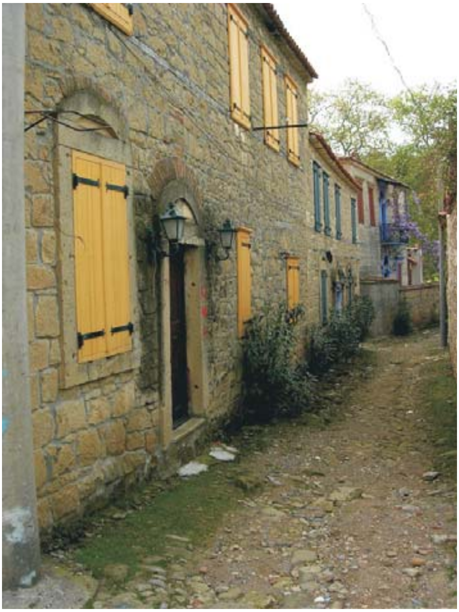
ADATEPE ✪✪

Traveling north from Behramkale, it is a lonely road through Paşakoy, where you can stop at the peak of the mountain for a final look at Assos. Passing through remote hamlets between Paşakoy and Ayvacik, women in traditional Anatolian dress work in the fields while men sit outside coffee houses. From Ayvacik, turn right on to E-87 to the hillside gem of Adatepe.

> **NOTE:** *Off E-87, there is little in the way of public transport, save for a few* dolmus *connections. If you plan to explore this area, hire a car or take your own bike.*

Adatepe has also become a magnet for intellectuals and writers from Istanbul who are attracted by the setting, which is reminiscent of a Florentine landscape. Honeysuckle grows alongside the uneven cobbled streets and wisteria overhands stone houses with terra cotta roofs. The 300-year-old village is one of the most beautiful and unspoilt villages in the country. Sadly, it was Greek and Turkish until the exchange of populations in 1923, when the Greeks were shipped back to their native land.

There is little to do in the village itself except revel in its beauty over tea at one of the cafés in the main square. A 15-minute walk from the square leads to the ruins of the Altar of Zeus, once used as a place to make offerings to the gods. The high vantage point gives a panorama across to the Bay of Edremit.


© Samantha Lafferty

Quiet lane in Adatepe

Just before you get to the village, on the right of the main Çanakkale-Izmir highway in the town of Kücükkuyu is the **Adatepe Olive Oil Museum** (☎ 0212-2924717, www.adatepe.com, open daily, free). It displays tools and memorabilia from olive oil production going back generations. The real enjoyment of the museum is that you can make olive oil the way it was made hundreds of years ago. Mahmut Boynudelik, a former tour guide who runs the museum, gives his guests a wicker basket and takes them into the hills below Mount Ida to pick olives. The olives are brought back to the factory – any that are less than perfect are tossed aside. The olives are crushed in granite stone mills to squeeze out the first oil. The second step is known as cold pressing. The oil is extracted from the mash of crushed olives using a hydraulic press. No heat can be used in the process. The sediment is then allowed to gradually settle to the bottom of storage tanks. The resulting oil is transported by gravity for bottling because pumping can damage it. After, you can dip fresh bread into the olive oil to taste the fruits of your labor. Mahmut has a shop next to the factory that sells a variety of olive oils and olive oil soaps.

OLIVE OIL CULTURE

For the past two millennia, olives have been cultivated in the Aegean region of Turkey. Grey-blue olive trees grow row-upon-row in the arid ground. The hot, breezy summers and calcareous soil create the perfect conditions.

Turkey is the world's fourth-biggest olive oil producer. The country's 85 million olive trees produce 1.2 million tons of olives and 200,000 tons of olive oil each year. Roughly half of Turkey's olive oil is exported. However, you will rarely see it sold in stores outside of the country. Instead, major producers in Italy and Spain sell the olive oil under their own brand names.

Olive trees have an average life span of 300 to 400 years. Some trees seem to survive forever. In Turkey, there are olive trees that are more than 2,000 years old.

The most common Turkish olives are Memeli, Donat and Ismir Sofralik, grown in the Marmara, Aegean, Mediterranean and Southeast Anatolia regions. Small black olives are most commonly eaten for breakfast with bread, cheese and tomatoes.

Virgin olive oil, known as *sizma*, is the natural, least refined oil, derived from simple cold pressing. Riviera is a mixture of pure and refined olive oil. Like fine wines, the oils vary in color and consistency depending on the type of olives and the location in which they were grown.

Olive oil is much healthier than butter because it does not contain cholesterol. It protects the bones, joints, liver and heart and is great for the skin. Some olive oil producers also sell olive oil lip balm, soap and shampoo. All over the region, stalls sell olive oil alongside honey and jams.

AYVALIK

From Adatepe, the highway runs along a swathe of small towns with sandy beaches and low-budget accommodation. Edremit, at the axis of the bay, is not worth a stop unless you need to change buses on your way down the coast.

© Botev

Amid the endless olive groves is Ayvalik, 94 km/58 feet south of Edremit. The fishermen's wharf is charming. Colorful trawlers bob about on the water in front of a stone promenade. Behind them, dozens of tiny islands are scattered like stepping stones out towards the island of Lesbos, the third-largest island in the Aegean Sea.

Ayvalik was another of the Aegean's Greek towns until many of its inhabitants were forced to leave their homes. The seafront and twisting back lanes are lined with the fine wooden houses built by wealthy Greek merchants. Some are now sinking its ruin, while others have been turned into atmospheric hotels. In between the houses, old Greek churches have been turned into mosques. Plan to visit the town on a Thursday, when Greeks throng the local market. Ferries run almost daily in summer between Ayvalik and Lesbos (a return ticket costs $38).

SARIMSAKLI

About eight km/five miles south of Ayvalik along the coast road is the resort of Sarimsakli, which boasts one of the best beaches in the North Aegean. Daring souls can continue southeast along a back road to **Seytan Sofrasi**, Devil's Table. It is the highest peak in Ayvalik and a great spot for watching the sunset over the surrounding islands.

One of the largest Turkish islands off Ayvalik is **Alibey**, also known as Cunda. The island is connected to the mainland by a causeway, or you can hop on a boat for the short crossing. A stroll around the island will take you through pine forests and olive groves down to secluded beaches where you can swim and snorkel. Even in high summer, when it is teeming with Turkish families, Alibey manages to enchant visitors who come for the fish restaurants as much as the landscape. Seek out the Greek Orthodox church. Its walls are in a dilapidated state and its frescoes have been spoiled, but somehow it still radiates elegance.

BERGAMA

Take the E-87 (D-550) highway south before veering inland along route D-240 through boundless agricultural fields to the town of Bergama (50 km/31 miles south of Ayvalik and 105 km/65 miles north of Izmir). In many ways, this is a bustling town, yet it retains a village atmosphere amid its swelling boundaries.

The soul of the town is the marketplace close to the Red Basilica. Donkeys and carts are parked alongside the stalls of fresh produce that engulf alleyways. Nearby, the ironworkers can be heard clanging copper and tin. Above the shopping streets is Eski Bergama, a collection of colorful single-storey stone houses with unusual wooden shutters blocking out the hot sun.

> **TIP:** *If you arrive in Bergama by bus, check that you will be dropped off at one of the town's two bus stations and not on the main highway. One bus station is located near the Tourist Information Office and the other is close to the bazaar quarter. You can walk to the center of the town from either. However, you may want to arrange for a taxi to ferry you around the sites of the ancient city of Pergamon. This should cost between $10 and $15.*

PERGAMON ✭✭

© Zeynep Al

Towering above the town of Bergama are the ruins of Pergamon, one of grandest and most lauded cities in the Hellenistic world. It was once a center of culture, medicine and commerce, rivaling the great cities of Antioch, Ephesus and Alexandria.

After the defeat of the Persians, Pergamon came under Alexander the Great's rule in 333BC. It did not gain prominence and become a city of great splendor until after Alexander's death. At that time, one of his generals, Lysimachus, took control of the city and its wealth. He entrusted the vast sum of 9,000 gold talents to Philetaerus, commander of Pergamon, for the city's defense. When Lysimachus died, Philetaerus claimed the throne, founded the Attalid dynasty and used the defense purse to develop the city.

Eumenes II is credited in the second century BC with erecting the most spectacular of the buildings adorning the acropolis and inspiring a period of cultural and economic advance. His legacy includes the renowned library, the theater built on a precipitous hillside, the palace and the Altar of Zeus. He also built the propylaeum, or monumental entrance, to the Temple of Athena.

Pergamon became part of the Roman Empire after King Attalus III, the last of the Attalid line, bequeathed it to a ruler many Hellenists considered to be their enemy. The city continued to flourish under the Romans, despite the odd uprising causing unwelcome interruptions.

The city achieved great eminence under Galen (129-216AD), whose knowledge of medicine and philosophy earned him acclaim as the greatest medical authority of ancient times. He began his career as a doctor to the gladiators before becoming the

Pergamon's Great Theater (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board) court physician to Roman emperors, including Marcus Aurelius. Galen was a prolific writer, although many of his books were destroyed in a devastating fire in 191.

Pergamon's glory days were behind her when Arab invaders briefly occupied the city in 716 and it was a forgotten ruin by the time the Turks captured it.

> **TIP:** *Touring the ruins of Pergamon takes a full day, especially in mid-summer. Take a bottle of water and start early in the morning as there is little shade.*

Begin your tour at the Asclepion before visiting the Archaeology Museum in Bergama and continuing through town to the Red Basilica and, finally, the Acropolis. There are separate entrance fees for each site.

THE ASCLEPION: As you approach Bergama from the highway, a sign-posted road turns sharply on your left and climbs for about a kilometer to the site of the world's first psychiatric and alternative healing center. The center (open daily in summer 8:30am-7pm; closes at 5pm in winter; entrance fee) was originally dedicated to Asclepius, the God of Medicine and Healing. The cult of the healing center dates from the fourth century BC, although most of the ruins are from the second century AD.

Far from being a place that people wanted to avoid, the medical center was something of a health spa for tired, overworked Greek and Roman businessmen and politicians. They were revived with mud baths, water from thermal springs, herbal remedies and massage. There was also some early psychotherapy with the interpretation of dreams. As with all good health spas, there would be an evening of socializing. This was usually a play performed at the 3,500-capacity theater.

The Asclepion had a reputation for curing everyone who entered it. At least, no deaths were recorded. That was because the doctors examined patients before they were allowed to enter. If they were ill, they were sent to Pamukkale. Hence, the large cemetery at Pamukkale.

You make your way to the ruins via the marble stones of the colonnaded Sacred Way, which used to connect the medical center with the Acropolis. Once inside, there is a courtyard where the fallen propylaeum lies and an altar inscribed with a serpent, the symbol of medicine. To the left of the entrance are stones marking the circular Temple of Asclepios, which was designed as a miniature of Rome's

Pantheon. In the northwest corner of the site, a Roman amphitheater is flanked by the remnants of Ionian columns.

ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM: Retrace the road back from the Asclepion towards Bergama town center. Halfway down on the left is the Archaeology Museum (Zafer Mahallesi, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 6, open 8am-12pm, 1pm-5pm, closed Monday), housing a collection of relics collected from Pergamon. It is a disgrace that the best artifacts, those from the monumental gate into the Temple of Athena and the friezes from the Altar of Zeus, are on display in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. The models and photographs in the museum in Bergama are scant compensation. The museum does still have other notable treasures, including a third-century mosaic of Medussa found in the lower city of Pergamon. There is also a nymph fountain rescued from Allianoi, the world's oldest known thermal city.

HISTORICAL INTEREST

Ancient ruins and modern demands clash horribly at Allianoi. The 1,800-year-old thermal spa is in danger of being submerged in the waters of the Yortanli Dam, needed to irrigate the land and improve farmers' incomes. Sadly, it means Turkey would lose a significant historical site with its defined streets and well-preserved domed bath that is still implausibly hot.

Campaigners have been pressing the government to halt the flooding and archaeologists have spent the past couple of years excavating the site in an attempt to salvage as many relics as possible.

RED BASILICA: Heading through town towards the Acropolis on top of the great mound in the distance, the road swings to the right where a hulk of terra cotta bricks stand out against the dark blue Aegean sky. The Red Basilica, or Kizil Avlu, (open daily 8:30am-6:30pm in summer; closes at 5:30pm in winter; entrance fee) straddles Bergama Çayi, the ancient Selinus River. Built in the second century, it was originally a temple dedicated to the Egyptian god, Serapis. The Byzantines had other ideas and converted it into a Christian church. It is one of the seven churches in Asia Minor listed in the Book of Revelation.

The marble that once adorned the brick temple has long been stripped off. The roof has also been lost and the elements hammer down on the walls, slowly beating them away.

THE ACROPOLIS: From the Red Basilica, follow the steep incline through Eski Bergama along a narrow, bone-shaking road to the pinnacle of Bergama's attractions, the Acropolis (open daily 8:30am-7pm; entrance fee). Pergamon is an example of smart town planning. It was designed on a series of terraces to capitalize on the 360-degree view. The citadel, on the highest level, contained palaces, temples and other public buildings reserved for rulers and officials. A fragment of a red brick wall, with a pink blossom tree growing next to it, is all that remains at the peak of the mound. Just below it is the most photogenic ruin, the **Temple of Trajan**, built by Emperor Hadrian for his predecessor, Trajan. Its white marble Corinthian columns are a contrast to the gray granite ruins around them.

To the east of the temple are the walls of the famed library. It was reputed to have held a collection of 200,000 volumes, although it is difficult to imagine how they would have been squeezed in. Mark Anthony carted many of the books off to Egypt as a present for Cleopatra after the library at Alexandria burned to the ground. In the center of the reading room is a pillar that once held a 3.5 m/11-foot statue of Athena.

In front of the library are the foundations of the Doric-style **Temple of Athena**, the patron goddess of Pergamon. There was a two-storey monumental gate leading into the temple. A re-creation of the gate was made in Berlin using fragments found during excavations carried out by German archaeologists in the 1880s.

THE ALTAR OF ZEUS: The Altar of Zeus, built by Eumenes II, fell to the same fate. The altar is decorated with a mammoth frieze depicting the battles between the gods and giants. The sculptures, which are so detailed that they appear to spring out from the marble, symbolize the victory by Pergamon kings over the Galatians. Today, all that remains on the site are the foundations.

Below the Temple of Athena, occupying a staggering near-vertical hillside location, is the **theater** of Pergamon. The 10,000-seat auditorium is another of Eumenes II's great constructions. Amble down the 80 rows of steps to the marble royal box where the king sat. The strange noise you can hear is the bleating of sheep grazing on weeds and others snoozing on the cool stone.

At the bottom of the theater is the **Temple of Dionysos** and the remains of its marble steps. A couple of broken columns lie across the grass that now covers much of the podium. It was originally built in

Opposite: Acropolis (image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

stone and was renovated in marble during the reign of Caracalla in the third century AD.

On the lower tiers, the city had public buildings, including a third-century agora, baths and houses. By Roman times, the city was spread across the surrounding plains, although little of its farthest reaches are still visible. A pathway across the meadows leads to the back of the Asclepion.

Immediately below the Acropolis lie the ruins of the **Middle City** of Pergamon, a site often overlooked by visitors. The city is still being excavated. Among the buildings unearthed so far are the temples of Hera Basileia and Demeter and several ancient shopping centers.

If you have time for a detour after Pergamon, head north to the pine-covered mountains of **Kozac**, a place where life has not altered for generations. Farther along the road you will reach the villages of Kaplan, Asagibey and Asagicuma, which is great trekking country. Afterwards, you can recuperate with a glass of homemade wine.

DIKILI

Just west of Bergama is the seaside town of Dikili, the preserve of Turkish tourists and a great place to experience the coast away from the crowds. Its six-km/four-mile sandy beach is a good spot to relax after exploring the ruins of Pergamon. The town comes to life on Tuesdays when there is a market selling locally produced organic food. The market attracts Greeks from the island of Lesbos. You can sometimes spot cruise liners anchored in the bay while passengers come ashore for tours of the ruins. Dikili is a good base for anyone exploring Pergamon. It has a good choice of low-budget hotels and seaside villas.

The area around Dikili has enough to occupy visitors for a few days. About 10 km/six miles east of the resort are the mud baths of **Kaynarca**, a large swamp with rushes and reeds. The hot spring water here is good for curing skin and gynecological conditions.

Head south from Dikili along a back road, hugging the coast to **Bademli**, an unspoilt village with a beautiful creek called Pisa where you can swim and snorkel. On the road between Bademli and Çandarli, stop at Limon Plaj and the tiny fishing harbor of Denizköy, almost totally hidden from view. A couple of trawlers are anchored next to a sandy beach. There are some poor roads along the coast, but the views are spectacular.

ÇANDARLI

Çandarli (40 km/25 miles south of Dikili) is a gem of a resort that few foreign tourists venture to. The 19-km/12-mile beach is almost empty and there is a lovely Genoese castle that dates from the 13th century. It was restored in 1995 after cracks appeared in three of its five towers. Sadly, it has remained closed ever since.

UFO SIGHTING

Budding investigators may want to visit Çandarli to solve the puzzle of the mysterious flying object. In 2001, two Turkish army pilots claim to have been in a dogfight with a UFO over the town. They said a pyramid-shaped luminous object approached them at high speed. On the ground, radar screens could not detect any objects other than the plane. The incident attracted lots of media attention in Turkey.

ESKI FOÇA

Turn east to pick up the E-87 again and continue south along the coast towards Foça. Along the route, seek out some of the coves jutting out into the Aegean. To reach Eski Foça, take the second turning off E-87.

> **TIP:** *The first exit, just past Aliaga, runs past Yeni Foça, known for its beaches, on the way to Eski Foça. The start of this road is blighted by factories and chemical works with lorries speeding past them. The second route, over the mountain, is far more scenic.*

Smart residential streets lead to a left-hand turn into the quaint town of Foça, ancient Phocaea. The road follows the sea and a narrow strip of beach down to **Kücükdeniz**, or Small Sea. The town attracts some British and Turkish vacationers, but luckily, tourism has not yet overwhelmed the fishing industry.

The Phocaeans were expert mariners and are believed to have invented the flat-bottomed boat to solve the problem of sailing ships weighted with a heavy cargo into shallow water.

KUŞUM
Y. EMRE

© Jan McGready

Boats in harbor, Eski Foça

Fish restaurants surround horseshoe-shaped Kücükdeniz stretching across to the Genoese fortress, which rings around to Büyükdeniz, Big Sea. Serious fishing trawlers are lined up the length of the main harbor.

The town takes a couple of hours to wander around. I recommend spending more time around Büyük Limani, bargain-hunting in the shops in the narrow paved streets, and sitting outside one of the cafés converted from typical Foça stone houses.

A cluster of islands off the coast can be explored on one of the boat tours in summer or with a friendly fisherman out of season. **Siren Cliffs** are the most impressive. It takes about 30 minutes to sail out to the volcanic cones, which rise straight out of the water. Beyond the rocks is **Atatürk Island**, named because its islets and rocks have created a formation that almost resembles the face of the great leader. From your boat, try to spot the Mediterranean monk seals that have made the bay their home.

MANISA

Follow E-87 to Menemen, where you turn left on to D-250, which leads to the modern city of Manisa.

The town had to be rebuilt after Greek forces destroyed its buildings when they retreated in 1922. Fortunately, Muradiye Camii, built in the 16th century by the architect Sinan, survived. Its religious school next door houses Manisa's **Archaeological Museum** (open Tuesday-Sunday, 9am-noon, 1-5:30pm; entrance fee). The museum has a fountain and mosaics from the ancient city of Sardis.

SARDIS

To reach Sardis from Manisa, follow D-250 south past Sipil Daği Milli Parki (a national park) to the town of Turgutlu, where you pick up E-96 and head east to the village of Sartmustafa. From Izmir, pick up the eastbound E-96 and follow it for 90 km/56 miles past fields of figs and grapes to Sartmustafa.

Buses depart from Izmir's main bus station for Salihli every 30 minutes. You can get out of the bus at Sardis and walk to the ruins or hop on a *dolmus*. The lack of decent hotels in the area means that it is best to see Sardis on a day-trip from Izmir.

At the foot of Mount Tmolus are the spectacular ruins of Sardis, the ancient Lydian capital. Poets and historians were intrigued by stories of "Sardis rich in gold" from the gold dust that flowed down the Pactalos River.

There was a settlement at Sardis (open daily 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) as early as Paleolithic times. By the late second millennium BC, there was an organized kingdom at the base of the great mound that spanned more than 500 years.

During the Mermnad dynasty (680-547BC), the empire reached its greatest expanses, stretching from the Aegean Sea to Central Anatolia. It was the Lydians who invented the first coins. They were made of a gold and silver alloy and engraved only with a lion's head, the royal emblem of Sardis. That changed when King Croesus was in charge of the kingdom, from about 560 to 547BC. Croesus, known for flaunting his enormous wealth on lavish gifts, ordered the coins be made of pure gold and silver. Croesus was the last and the most lavish of the Lydian kings.

The city's vast wealth made it a target of envy and attack. In 547BC, Cyrus the Great sacked the city and it remained under his control until the great Hellenistic freedom fighter, Alexander the Great, romped into Sardis. The city's most important architectural projects, the Temple of Artemis and the gymnasium complex, were initiated during Hellenistic and Roman times.

Sardis was flattened by the earthquake that hit the region in 17 AD. It was rebuilt and maintained its importance until the late Byzantine period, when Mongol warrior Tamerlane marched in and destroyed it again in 1402.

Sardis was one of the Seven Churches of the Revelation in Asia Minor and attracts many visitors following a biblical tour of the country. Excavations are ongoing in the ancient city and there are four principal areas that can be visited: the Acropolis; the gymnasium and other ruins along the highway; the valley of the ancient Pactalos River; and the tombs at Bintepe.

GYMNASIUM: The gymnasium and bath complex, along with the adjacent synagogue, are the most impressive buildings. The gymnasium was built towards the end of the second century and painstakingly restored over a decade. It has a grand, marble entrance leading into a courtyard encircled by columns decorated with gods and satyrs. The most famous of the carvings is the Laughing Faun, with its impish smile.

The remains of the largest ancient synagogue ever uncovered can be found in one of the halls inside the gymnasium. The city's main street, which stretched along the southern side of the gymnasium, was paved with marble blocks and had shops lining both sides. The columns that once stood along it are now underneath the tarmac of the present-day road. On the opposite side of the gymnasium is a building known as the **House of Bronzes**, or Bronze House of the Infidels. It was named

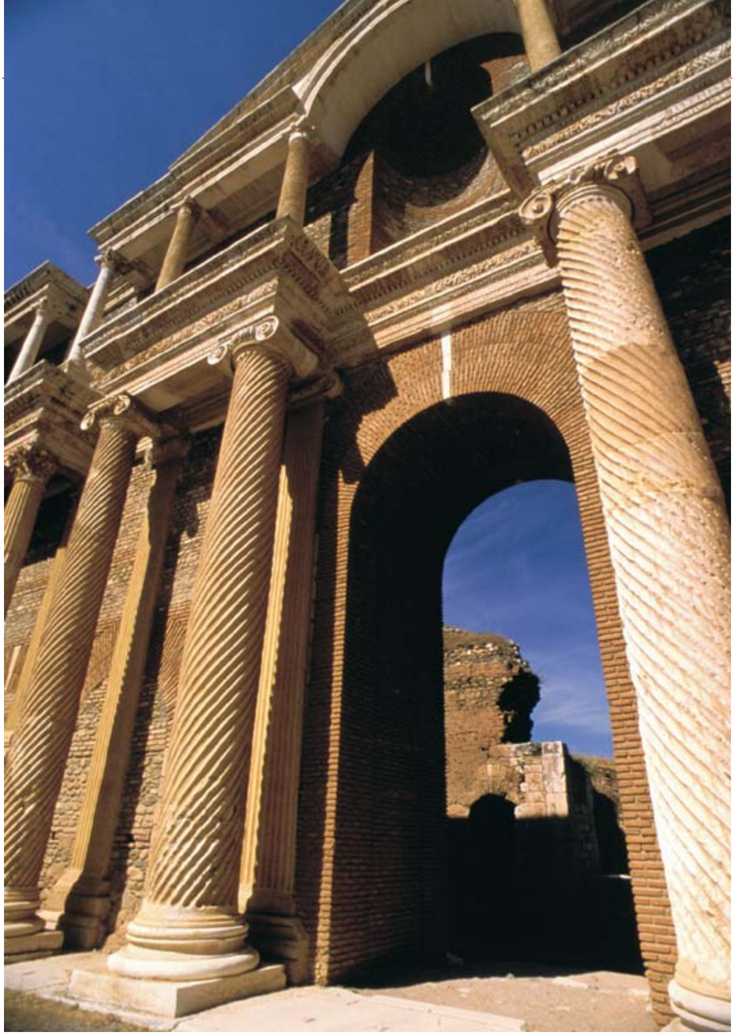


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Formidable entrance at Sardis

after the bronze religious artifacts and other implements found inside. The building may have been a bishop's palace.

THE ACROPOLIS & THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS: From the House of Bronzes, walk past an agora and the remains of a Byzantine church and a Roman bath to the base of the Acropolis. It was considered unassailable until the Persians scaled its mighty walls and overpowered Croesus' kingdom. Modern-day explorers face an equally challenging climb to survey the inner sanctum of a king still associated with fabulous wealth. From the summit, the plain of 1,000 burial mounds, known as **Bin Tepe**, makes a ghostly vista.

The temple was initially built during the Lydian period and was twice reconstructed by the Greeks. The original temple dates from the fourth century BC. It was erected on a massive scale to rival Ionian temples at Ephesus, Samos and Didyma. The temple's western section was dedicated to Artemis, goddess of animals and childbirth, and the eastern part to Zeus. The Temple of Artemis was so beautiful that it lured tourists even in ancient times.

THE ROAD TO IZMIR

The D-565 connects Manisa with the ring road that leads into Izmir. For travelers wishing to avoid the city, the same highway skirts around it. If you are planning to drive from Istanbul, Izmir is 560 km/348 miles away.

The combined E-87 and D-500 road splits into two outside of Izmir, making for a confusing tangle of flyovers and junctions as you try to navigate your way into the city. South of Izmir, D-500 heads south through Muğla and E-87 goes inland towards Pamukkale before going south to Antalya.

© Jan McGready

IZMIR

After days lost in the olive groves and meadows of the North Aegean, a traveler's first glimpse of Izmir from the highway is startling. Turkey's third-largest city is a labyrinth of concrete jutting out into the Aegean Sea. Travelers who are not too overwhelmed to venture into the city limits will find palm tree-lined promenades skirting along the bay, backed by graceful avenues and terraces rising up the slopes of the surrounding mountains.

Izmir is certainly a paradox. The city dates from the third millennium BC, yet it is quintessentially modern and cosmopolitan. That is because the city was completely rebuilt after the Greeks almost obliterated it in a fire in 1922, as they fled following the War of Independence. The fire wiped out all but a few traces of the city's rich Greek and Roman history.

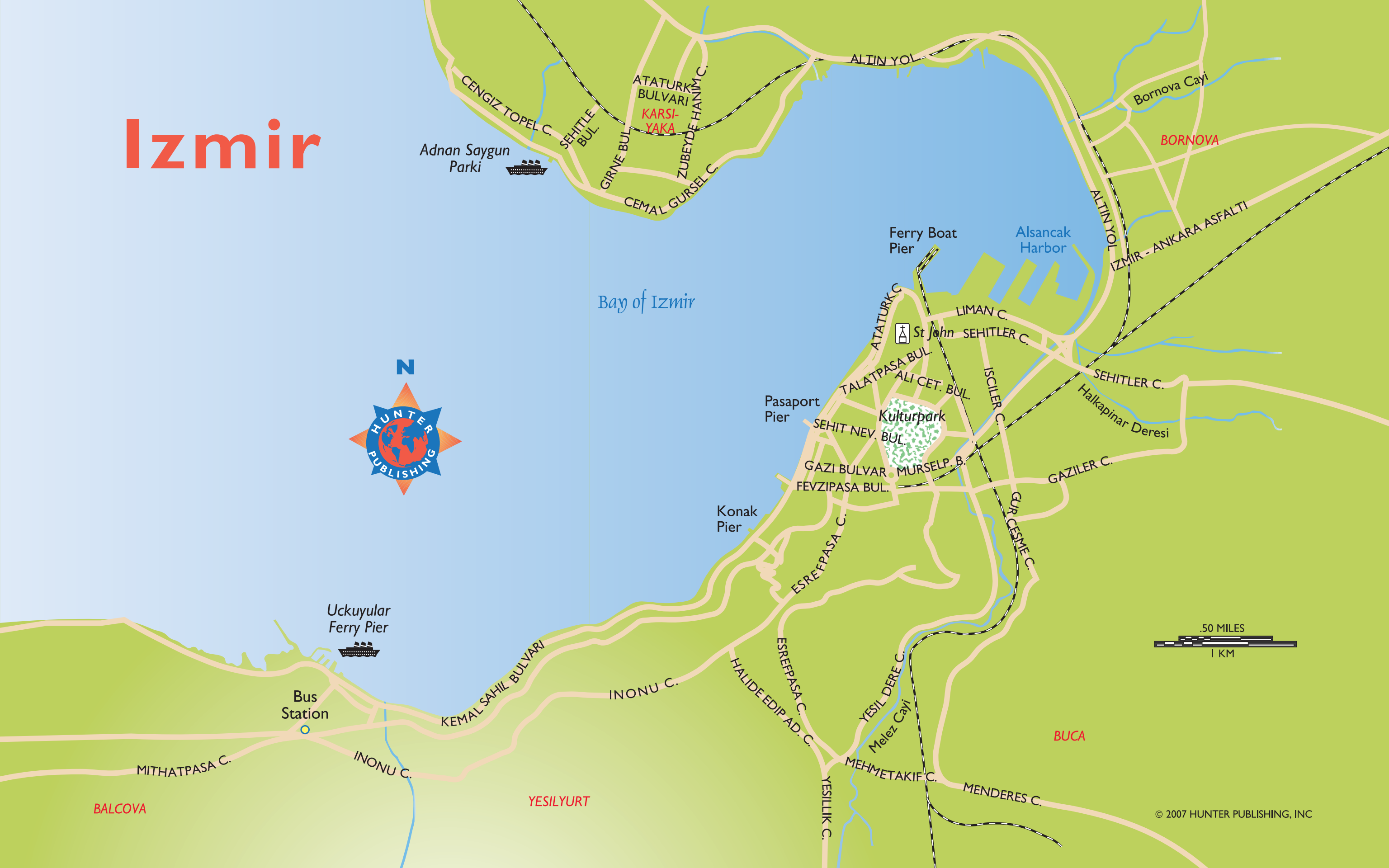
During the first millennium BC, Izmir was known as **Smyrna**, a word that means "land of the holy mother," and ranked as one of the most important cities in the Ionian Federation. It was during this time that Homer is believed to have lived here.

Smyrna's importance faded under subsequent Lydian and Persian rule and it had to wait until Alexander the Great built a new city to spark a renaissance. Still, it was not until the Roman period in the first century BC that the glory days returned and the city thrived as a commercial center. This continued under Byzantine rule until an earthquake floored the city in 178 AD.

Unrest and power struggles stilted any revival until the Seljuk Turks took control in 1390. Smyrna became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1415, even though it was populated by Greeks, Jews and Armenians with barely a Turk to be spotted on its streets.

The few extant relics of the former Izmir are worthy of spending time in the city. Izmir may be large, but its sites are clumped together in sections making it possible to see them all in one day. There are good public transport links and it is better to use these rather than fight your way through the traffic.

Konak is the main point for navigating the city and sightseeing. There are attractions around the main square, museums and a bazaar. To the north, along the waterfront, is Alsancak and to the south of Konak is Asansor, the old Jewish quarter.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THE EMBLEMS OF IZMIR

The traditional symbol of Izmir is the 19th-century public elevator linking Dario Moreno Caddesi with the summit of the hill at Halil Rifat Paşa, 50 m/165 feet up. There are stunning views across the city and the bay from the **Teras Restaurant** (☎ 0232-2612626) at the top. Dario Moreno Caddesi itself is a pretty street where restored houses stand toe to toe.

Clock tower

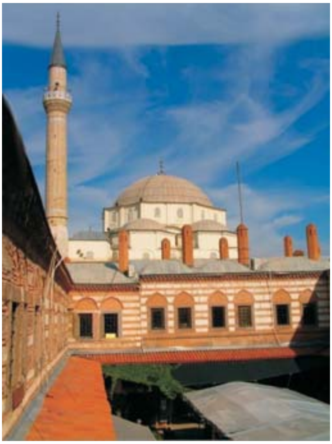
A modern symbol is the **clock tower** in the center of the city at Konak Meydani. It was built in 1901 as an elaborate gift from Sultan Abdulhamid. The square itself has a combined role as a park and terminal for ferries crossing to the Karsiyaka district.

South of Konak Meydani is the **Archaeology Museum** (Bahribaba Parki, ☎ 0232-4890796; open Tuesday to Sunday 9:30am-5:30pm; entrance fee), which has a good collection of Hellenistic and Roman artifacts from excavations at Iassos, Bergama, Izmir's Agora and Bayrakli, Izmir's original settlement. The lower ground floor has the most impressive display with statues of Poseidon and Demeter.

It seems all cities in Turkey have an ethnography museum and Izmir is no exception. Located next to the Archaeology Museum, the **Etnografya Muzesi** (☎ 0232-4848324; open Tuesday to Sunday 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) is set in a mansion that once served as a hospital. It now contains exhibits of Ottoman home life, including a traditional house and a bridal chamber, with the added bonus of giving an insight into the work environment with a printing shop, pharmacy and glass-making atelier.

ANCIENT SHOPPING

Head east from the clock tower to the shopping district just beyond Anafartalar Caddesi. Most tourists come for the boutiques, but serious hagglers would rue missing out on a trip to **Kizilaragasi Han Bazaar**


© Vehbi Mogol

Kizilaragasi Han Bazaar

(open daily 9am-7pm). The Ottoman bedesten (covered market) dates from the 1700s and is in wonderful condition after its recent restoration. If this inspires a spell of shopping, visit nearby **Kemeralti Bazaar** to hunt for antiques and jewelry.

The ancient shopping center, east of Gaziosmanpaşa Bulvari, is less auspicious. Constructed during the reign of Alexander the Great, the **Agora** (open daily 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) consists of little more than a few remnants of columns, gates and stalls.

The Velvet Fortress, or Kadifekale (open from sunrise to sunset), is another of Alexander's ruins. Its name conjures up an image of a grand castle with sleek walls flowing around the hillside. Sadly, the reality falls well short of the vision. The citadel is overrun with street children and peddlers who make it unpleasant for tourists to linger.

ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN

When the crowds and the sprawl become overpowering for little legs, head for one of the parks. The most popular place for respite is **Kültürpark** north of Eylul Meydani. It has lots of open space with a lake and botanical gardens and plenty to keep children happy, including a zoo, amusement park and fairground rides. There are also tennis and golf clubs.

Bostanli recreation area is part of a new development along the bay. It has a children's playground, basketball courts, tennis courts, skateboard rinks, jogging and biking routes, and to unwind after all that, there are picnic areas and cafés.

ÇESME

Out on a peninsula 80 km/50 miles west of Izmir are the crowded beaches of Çeşme. The road passes blankets of aniseed and fig. Named after the Turkish word for fountain, Çeşme has no shortage of hot wa-

ter springs from Balçova, just outside Izmir, out to the Sifne Bay at Ilica.

The main historical draws are the 14th-century Genoese fortress and nearby caravansary, which has been turned into a hotel. The beaches and coastline are what you should really make the trip for. The best beach is the seven-km/four-mile stretch of grainy white sand on **Ilica beach**. The long quay serves as a beach club during daytime and becomes a crowded bar at night.

On the opposite side of the peninsula, a hilltop mound of windmills and 800-year-old barrelhouses guard the entrance to the village of **Alaçati**. The windy cove is a haven for windsurfers.

Windsurfers at Alaçati

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON WHEELS

CYCLING TOURS

Bozcaada is great to cycle around, particularly if you want to visit the vineyards. The roads vary between tarmac and dirt and are generally quiet and flat, making them perfectly suited to cyclists.

From Bozcaada village, head west and climb 192 m/630 feet to the summit of **Goztepe Hill**. From this high point, you can see across the Aegean Sea to the ancient city of Troy. From Goztepe, continue west along the central road through vineyards and pine forests until you reach the tip of the island, where a lighthouse stands surrounded by wind turbines. From here, head south and follow the coast road along the beaches, before turning north back to Bozcaada.

You can hire bikes cheaply at **Tenedos Bicycle House** (Alaybey Mahallesi Liman Baskanligi Yani, next to the harbormaster's office, cell ☎ 0536-4487251.

ADVENTURES ON WATER

DIVING

The water around **Bozcaada** is so clear the area to the south of the island is known as The Aquarium. Diving around the island is ideal for beginners, since it is not too deep. Most dive points have access directly from the beach, making them some of the most sought after in Turkey. Also recommended are nighttime scuba dives for experienced divers. The diving season is from May to October.

Dive Points

Mermer Cape (mermer means "marble") is the place to dive when the Bozcaada winds are at their worst. The dive point is in a natural harbor and well protected by the cliffs. It is home to three major diving areas. You can visit **Seal Caves**, although you would be lucky to spot one. Octopuses and sponges are better bets. Most scuba dive training is also done in this area. On the seabed you may come across antique artifacts, such as ancient ceramic pieces or amphorae. Do not remove them.

At a depth of 20 m/66 feet, the underwater cliff of **Sulu Bahçe** (Water Garden) is accessible from the shore. **Bakla Taslari** is an extension of the Water Garden, with the deepest point at 16 m/52 feet. **Ayazma Beach** is the most famous beach on the island and is the best night diving location. The deepest point of the underwater cliff is 13 m/43 feet. **Kalin Burun** (Thick Cape) is the deepest diving area on the island, with an average depth of 30 m/98 feet. It has plenty of sea life and a few pieces of ancient treasure. It is accessible only by boat.

The **Tavsan (Rabbit) Island Group**, also known as Mavria, is made up of four small islands. Known for its crystal-clear waters, the deepest point is 35 m/115 feet.

SAILING

Foça is known more as a fishing hub than a destination for sailing enthusiasts, but that may change with the opening of a new **Sunsail club** (www.sunsail.co.uk). The resort's Learn to Sail packages include yacht, dinghy and powerboat sailing courses for adults and children. The courses, which are open only to resort guests and are recognized by the Royal Yacht Association, are organized into different levels of ability from beginners upward. Each dinghy sailing course lasts for two days

Opposite: Underwater Life (© DesertDiver/Dreamstime.com) and costs $130. Yacht sailing lessons start at $260 for three days. For speed nuts, the powerboat courses teach the basics of launching, mooring and recovery and cost $195 for two days.

WINDSURFING

The wind at **Alaçati** is funneled through the hills and blows constantly all year, drawing windsurfers and kitesurfers from around the world. In little more than 20 years, the bay has been turned from a no man's land into a windsurfers' paradise.

For novices, the technique of windsurfing is no mean feat. It is an incredibly steep learning curve and beginners should have lots of enthusiasm and patience. At least the shallow water and sandy seabed make Alaçati a safe place to practice. In summer, the north wind is dominant and the water barely ripples. In winter, the south wind whips up some big waves and that is when the serious windsurfers move in.

Lessons

Alaçati Windsurf School (☎ 0232-7160511, www.windsurfersparadise.com) runs beginner lessons for individuals and groups, as well as advanced lessons for windsurfers who want to improve their art. The school uses MISTRAL and RRD boards for lessons. The equipment is available for hire separately. Lessons can be booked by the hour, day or week. Courses cost $60 for two hours and $190 for 10 hours.

© Alaçati Windsurf School

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

TREKKING

Mount Ida, one of the most sacred mountains in Greek mythology, was the location of a beauty pageant that laid the foundation for the Trojan War. It was here that Paris was asked to judge the contest between between Aphrodite, Hera and Athena. When Aphrodite won, she promised Helen to Paris and the rest, as they say, is a long and bloody history. The mountain, also known as the Mount of the Goddess, is located near Edremit Bay, close to Ayvacik and Edremit. It is a protected national park and has some good trekking routes, although none of them is mapped.

To get a taste of the spectacular scenery in the park without a guide, stick to the paths that lead from Adatepe to the edge of Mount Ida. After a 10-minute drive from Adatepe, you reach a half-built hotel in the forest. Take one of the pathways from here down to the bottom of the slope, where there is a ruined watermill, its millstone lying in the cold water of Mihliçay Stream. Cross the arched stone bridge over the Mihliçay and head into the dense forest in search of one of the many waterfalls. If you want to trek farther into the depths of the park to the peak of Mount Ida, it is advisable to hire a local guide from one of the villages. Alternatively, park trekking and horseback riding tours can be organized at **Hunnap Han**, a boutique hotel in Adatepe (☎ 0286-7526581, www.hunnaphan.com).

© Hunnap Han

Hunnap Han hotel

NOTE: *The mountain is a stomping ground for bears, jackals and wild boars.*

ECO-ADVENTURES

BIRDING

Gediz Delta is known as the **Izmir Bird Paradise**. Stretching from Bostanli's shores to the Foça hills, the wetland was created by the Gediz River depositing silt at the point where it meets the Aegean Sea. The lagoons, marshes and salt-pans are breeding grounds for about 250 bird varieties, as well as an abundance of fish and reptiles. You can expect to see flamingoes, spur-winged plovers and little egrets, to name a few. The sanctuary has even been a nesting site for the rare Dalmatian pelican.

Naturetrek, a company specializing in botanical and bird watching vacations, has a nine-day birding tour of the Aegean region combining Gediz Delta, Dilek National Park and Lake Bafa. The trip costs $2,200 and includes return flights to London and accommodation (UK ☎ 0962-733051, www.naturetrek.co.uk).

CULTURAL ADVENTURES

FESTIVALS

The North Aegean is by no means a poor cousin of Istanbul and Ankara when it comes to culture. Izmir has a thriving theater and music scene with a state opera and ballet company and a state symphony orchestra. In summer, open-air concerts are hosted in **Kültür Park** in the center of the city.

THE INTERNATIONAL IZMIR FESTIVAL: This annual festival attracts big names from the world of jazz, pop, classical music and opera. Sting, Ray Charles, Elton John and José Carreras are among the list of past performers. The event is extremely popular, with people coming as much for the venues, which include Kültür Park in Izmir and the Celsus Library and Great Theater in Ephesus, as for the line-up. The festival runs from mid-June until mid-July. Tickets sell out fast for the shows in Ephesus and it is recommended that you book tickets early. Tickets ($6-$65) can be purchased from Biletex (☎ 0216-5569800, www.biletix.com) or D&R bookstores in the city.

IZMIR EUROPEAN JAZZ FESTIVAL: This two-week Jazz Festival cleverly combines seminars hosted by jazz historians, musicians and photographers with concerts at Sabanci Cultural Palace and the North Shields Pub in the city's Konak district. The festival starts in early March. Tickets ($13) can be purchased from the IKSEV box office, ☎ 0232-4830308; Biletex, ☎ 0216-5569800, www.biletix.com; or D&R bookstores.

© Dario Moreno

Passport Quay, Konak district

More information and programs for the two festivals profiled above can be found on the website of the Izmir Foundation for Culture, Arts and Education (Izmir Kültür ve Sanat Egitim Vakfi) at www.iksev.org or by calling ☎ 0232-4820090.

IZMIR SHORT FILM FESTIVAL: With its philosophy of "Film is beautiful, short film is more beautiful," the festival aims to promote the art of filmmaking both in Turkey and on an international stage. It compromises a series of seminars alongside film screenings. There is also an award for best fiction and best animation open to national and international filmmakers. ☎ 0232-4820489, www.izmirkisafilm.org.

THEATER

Izmir is home to the **Izmir State Symphony Orchestra** (☎ 0232-4848343) and the **Izmir State Opera and Ballet** (☎ 0232-4846445). Performances take place at weekends between May and September at the Atatürk Culture Centre. For listings, check local newspapers and the Ministry of Culture's website at www.kultur.gov.tr.

ART GALLERIES

Museum of Painting and Sculpture, Mithat Paşa Caddesi 94 Konak, Izmir, ☎ 0232-4414192, open daily 8:30am-5:30pm). The museum has permanent and temporary exhibitions of paintings, sculpture, ceramics and photography. It also runs children's art classes at the weekend.

ADVENTURES FOR THE BODY & SOUL

THERMAL SPAS

Balçova Termal, just outside of Izmir, ☎ 0232-2590102, www.balcovatermal.com. The Balçova spa was built on the site of the Baths of Agamemnon. According to one legend, an oracle advised Agamemnon to bring soldiers who were wounded in the Trojan War to be cured in the healing thermal springs. Even today, the spa boasts it can cure 95% of diseases. Its pools reach temperatures of 95°C and are rich with calcium, potassium and magnesium, said to aid stomach complaints and revitalize skin.

PHILOSOPHY & LITERATURE CLASSES

The ancient cities along the Aegean Coast were renowned for promoting culture and art, and for their medical advances. They were also known for their great thinkers. Three of the earliest known Western philosophers, Thales, Anaximenes and Anaximander, hail from the region. Even Aristotle was drawn to Assos, where he spent several years teaching philosophy. It is, in many ways, poetic that the region is once again attracting philosophers.

Philosophy in Assos, www.philosophyinassos.org, is a non-profit organization that meets each year to have informal discussions about philosophical problems. They meet at Assos to philosophize as the

Greeks did amid the ancient ruins and unspoilt landscape. Classes in the four-day program are free.

The village of **Adatepe** on the edge of Mount Ida is a magnet for intellectuals and artists from Istanbul, who meet each year for a series of three-day or week-long programs to discuss philosophy and literature. A good level of Turkish is required to join the classes. ☎ 0286-7525999, www.tasmektep.com.

SHOPPING

Alaçati's Antika Pazari. The antiques bazaar and food market in Alaçati flood out on to a 1.5-km/.9-mile alleyway, attracting shoppers from across the region. Everything is for sale, from houseplants to fish, pottery and jewelry.

© Zeytin Home

Zeytin's olive selection

Evcim, Kücük Deniz Çarşisi 210 Sokak 16, Foça, ☎ 0232-8127020. The store sells unusual silver and gold bangles and earrings and marine-themed gifts.

Zeytin Home, Kücük Deniz Çarşisi 210 Sokak 12/A, Foça, ☎ 0232-8123259, www.zeytinhome.com, is great for gifts of olives, flavored olive oil and soaps. There is also pottery for serving the olive oil.

IZMIR

Izmir has an overload of 17 **shopping malls**. Most are located in the suburbs of Balçova, Montro and Konak.

Gustave Eiffel, designer of the landmark tower in Paris, designed the steel **Konak Pier** building on the waterfront in Izmir. It served as a French and a Turkish customs house and a fish market before being renovated and converted into a shopping center in 1998.

Kipa Çiğli, Yeni Havlaani Yolu 40, Çiğli, ☎ 0232-3865555, sells everything you could every hope to buy at boutique and budget prices.

Check out the Boyner Outlet, which offers designer brands at discount prices.

Hugo Boss Outlet Center, Akçay Caddesi, Gaziemir, ☎ 0232-2520995. This three-storey outlet mall has clothes, accessories, shoes, jewelry and perfume on offer at discount prices.

The city also has some enjoyable **markets**. **Kizkaragasi Han**, Kemeralti, open daily 9am-7pm, is a fine 18th-century Ottoman inn that sells ceramics, antiques, jewelry and carpets.

Güzelyali Pazari, also known as the Üçkuyular Meydani after the square where it is held, is one of the oldest bazaars in Izmir. Held every Wednesday and Sunday, its 200 stands sell clothes, pottery, glassware and organic vegetables and spices.

If you are looking for brand names and something sophisticated, take the ferry north to the European quarter of **Alsancak**, where the city's most **exclusive shops** are found. Stroll around **Anafartalar Caddesi**, which is lined with street vendors and jewelry and clothing stores. The streets around nearby **Fevzipasa Bulvari** are full of shops selling leather handbags and jackets.

Lacoste, Plevne Bulvari, Alsancak, ☎ 0232-4635193, is one of the three Lacoste outlets in Izmir selling upmarket sportswear and causal men and women's clothes.

Sems Ilkan Jewellery, 1407 Sokak 4/A, Alsancak, ☎ 0232-4635033, offers beautiful handcrafted gemstone and Art Deco jewelry.

Agora D&R, Agora Shopping Mall, Mithat Paşa Caddesi, Balçova. This is a good place to find English-language books, magazines, CDs and maps.

NIGHTLIFE

CINEMA

If you want to take in a movie, then **Izmir** is a good bet. The city has a whole host of movie theaters showing Turkish and English-language films. **Cinecity Kipa**, Çiğli, ☎ 0232-3865888, is a state-of-the-art nine-screen movie theater.

NIGHTCLUBS & BARS

Babylon Alaçati, Alaçati Beach Resort, Cark Plaji, Liman Mevkii, ☎ 0232-7166707, www.babylon.com.tr. Istanbul's best music venue, Babylon, takes a summer break in Alaçati. The club attracts top music names for concerts by the beach.

Lowry's Irish Pub, Izmir Caddesi, Ilica near Çeşme, ☎ 0232-7230425, has Irish management and a good atmosphere.

Nightlife in **Izmir** can be as hectic or as sedate as you wish. Like many European cities, Izmir has been gentrified with café culture following the development of the city's waterfont at Kordon Boyu, Passport Pier and Karsiyaka. Most of the after-hours fun also happens around these bay areas, with nightclubs and bars staying open until the early hours.

Charlie's Cocktail Bar, 1386 Sokak 8/B, Alsancak, Izmir, ☎ 0232-4214981, is a mainstay of the tourist and expat scene.

Diva Bar, Cengiz Topel Caddesi 30/1, Bostanli, Karsiyaka, Izmir, ☎ 0232-3307171, is a busy jazz and blues bar.

Mavi, Cumhuriyet Bulvari 206, Alsancak, Izmir, ☎ 0232-4631094, has live rock music.

La Sera, Atatürk Caddesi 190, Izmir, ☎ 0232-4642594, is a contemporary bar with live Turkish music every night.

© Hilton Hotels

Windows on the Bay Bar, Hilton Hotel, Gazi Osmanpasa Bulvari 7, Izmir, ☎ 0232-4976060, open 7pm-11pm. A smart and quite formal bar at the top of the hotel, shown at left. As its name suggests, you get a great view over the city from windows all around.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL PRICES

$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Costs given here are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

ADATEPE

© Hunnap Han

AUTHOR PICK: Hunnap Han, Adatepe Koyu, ☎ 0286-7526581, www.hunnaphan.com, is an 18th-century Ottoman mansion that has been restored into a 20-room hotel. Its gardens are filled with flowers and peppered with tables and chairs that invite lazy days reading a good book. The same family also has turned a former stone schoolhouse into an eight-bedroom hotel called Palmiye. $$$

ASSOS (BEHRAMKALE)

AUTHOR PICK: Biber Evi, Behramkale center, below the ruins of Assos, ☎ 0286-7217410, www.biberevi.com. This six-room boutique hotel is set in a restored stone house surrounded by terraces packed with herbs and citrus trees. Rooms are individually decorated in Ottoman style, with wrought iron cartwheels turned into candelabras and bathrooms tucked into former walk-in closets. The restaurant has won wide newspaper acclaim. No smoking policy. $$$$

© Biber Evi

Dolunay Pansiyon, Berhamkale center, ☎ 0286-7217172, is a clean, family-run pension. Its large rooms have twin and triple beds that would suit groups of friends traveling together. There are views of the surrounding valley. $$

Eris Pansiyon, Kadirga Cikisi, ☎ 0286-7217080, www.assos.de/eris. American owners, Emily and Clinton, have put together this pretty stone guesthouse in the picturesque village. They offer afternoon tea and homemade cakes in their flower-filled garden. $$

© Eris Pansiyon

AYVACIK

Berceste, Sivrice Feneri Mv, Bektas, ☎ 0286-7234616, www.assos.de/berceste. This mansion house was transformed into a stunning nine-room hotel set within olive groves overlooking the Aegean Sea. The interior features rustic stone walls and giant fireplaces. The four-poster beds seem to have been made from entire tree trunks. Everything is done on a grand scale. Prices include an evening meal. $$

© Berceste

AYVALIK

Ayvalik Beach Hotel, Seytan Sorfasi Yolu, ☎ 0266-3245300, ayvalikbeach.com, is an apartment-style resort on the outskirts of town. It has tennis, watersports and a private sandy beach.

BOZCAADA

AUTHOR PICK: **Akvaryum Pansiyon**, Mermerburnu Mevkii, Bozcaada, ☎ 0532-7464618, www.akvaryumbozcaada.com. This six-room whitewashed pension sits on a secluded stretch of beach surrounded by forests. It is a breathtaking location and a must for anyone who has ever dreamed of taking moonlit beach walks. What more could you want? Try including the owners, Deniz and Berna, who are great fun. $$

AUTHOR PICK: **Kaikias**, Kale Arkasi, ☎ 0286-6970250, www.kaikias.com, is an utterly charming wooden house turned boutique hotel behind the castle and harbor in Bozcaada. It has mahogany floors and furniture throughout and bedrooms that girls big or small would love to transport home with them. $$$

ÇESME

Oev, Yeni Mecidiye Mahallesi, Kemalpasa Caddesi 76A, Alaçati village, ☎ 0232-7166150, www.o-ev.com. When a former model and owner of a chic home furnishing store decides to turn her hand to designing a hotel, the end result is bound to be something special. Emil Aliberti's Mediterranean-style hotel is a dream. $$$$

Beyaz Han, Yeni Mecidiye Mahallesi, Arasok 7, Alaçati village, ☎ 0232-7168453, www.beyazhan.com. Sophisticated and urbane are the themes for this three-story hotel. Rooms feature four-poster beds and designer bathrooms. The dining room is intimate and there is a shady courtyard. $$$

DIKILI

Villa Honorah, www.responsibletravel.com or direct at www.villahonorah.co.uk. Set amid the quiet residential streets of Dikili, this spacious, pristine villa has everything you could possibly require to convince yourself you are at home. There is a stylish sitting room, fully-equipped kitchen and two bedrooms, one with a terrace. Outside is another terrace and pretty garden where you can relax after an overdose of ancient ruins. The owners, the Egin family, provide a free travel planning service and are incredibly hospitable and helpful. Optional extras include a cook and chauffeur. $$$

FOÇA

AUTHOR PICK: **Foça Antique Hotel**, Kücük Deniz Sahil Caddesi 154, ☎ 0232-8124313, www.focantiquehotel.com, is a quirky boutique hotel in every sense, with themed rooms such as the safari room complete with leopard-print bedcovers and mosquito nets. The 10-room hotel is set in a stone Greek house dating from the 1890s. A homemade breakfast is served in the ground floor café-bar overlooking the Aegean Sea. $$$

© Foca Antique Hotel

Melaike Hotel, Ismet Paşa Mahallesi 200 Sokak 20, Eski Foça, ☎ 0232-8122414. This 22-room family-run hotel is set in the back streets of Foca, among old Greek houses. Rooms are of a good standard and have en-suite showers. There is a roof terrace and snack bar. $$

© Anemon Hotels

IZMIR

Anemon Fuar, Izmir Enternasyonal Fuar Karsisi, 1362 Sokak 57, Alsancak, ☎ 0232-4460646, www.anemonhotels.com, is the latest hotel opened by the Anemon chain. It is very contemporary and stylish. Each room has a plasma TV, mini-bar, wireless Internet and air conditioning. There is also a sleek restaurant and a sauna, both with views. The chain has a second hotel in the center of the city. $$

Antik Han Hotel, Anafartalar Caddesi 600, Mezarlikbasi, Çankaya, ☎ 0232-4892750, www.otelantikhan.com. This converted inn sits in the middle of a shopping lane. Great attention was paid to detail in the restoration of the property, making it a charming place to stay. There are 30 rooms, some with balconies, satellite TV, mini-bars and air conditioning. There is also a parking lot and a grand restaurant. $$

Balçova Termal, ☎ 0232-2590102, www.balcovatermal.com, is a gorgeous spa hotel with thermal pools full of natural minerals and a host of skin treatments. There are 204 rooms, including 24 designed for people with handicaps. The site also has a tennis court, mini-golf, beauty center, a shopping mall and a children's playground. $$

Best Western Hotel Konak, Mithatpasa Caddesi 128, Konak, ☎ 0232-4891500, US & Canada 800-780-7234, www.bestwestern.com, is set in a tower block overlooking the bay in Izmir and is close to the shopping districts. The décor is slightly dated, but it does have good amenities, including high-speed Internet access, satellite TV, two restaurants and a cocktail lounge. $$$

© Best Western Hotels

Hilton Hotel, Gazi Osmanpasa Bulvari 7, ☎ 0232-4976060, www.hilton.com, sales.izmir@hilton.com. This 380-room hotel has all the conveniences of any Hilton, plus good recreational facilities, including a fitness suite, sauna, tennis courts and a swimming pool. The hotel is located near the old town and there are views of the Citadel and mountains. $$$

Otel Kaya Prestige, Sair Esref Bulvari, 1371 Sokak 7, Çankaya, ☎ 0232-4830323, www.kayaprestige.com.tr, has 142 spacious rooms, some with Jacuzzi baths. There is a cozy bar, a café and an à la carte restaurant. Mini fitness suite and a sauna. $$$

Tanik Hotel, 1364 Sokak 13, Konak, ☎ 0232-4412007, tanikotel@ttnet.net.tr. A two-star hotel that's a good choice for budget travelers. It is more modern than many of the budget hotels in the city and is located in the middle of one of Izmir's shopping districts. It has 36 rooms and two bars. $$

WHERE TO EAT

AYVALIK

Oz Canli Balik, Gazinolar Caddesi. This eatery is close to the seafront, though is just far enough away to keep the prices down. Great *mezes* and seafood. $$

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

BERGAMA

Sağlem Restaurant, Cumhuriyet Meydani 47, ☎ 0232-6328897, saglemmehmet@hotmail.com. The lively owner, Mehmet, is from Şanliurfa in southeast Turkey. He serves the best eggplant kebab on the west coast. Sağlem is the best choice in town when visiting the ruins of Pergamon. Mehmet's other restaurant, in nearby Dikili, has live Saz music in the evenings. $$

FOÇA

Café Barbarossa, Asiklar Caddesi 41, Eski Foça, ☎ 0232-8125042, sits on the waterfront in the large harbor, Büyükdeniz. It is a small café-bar serving herbal tea, cocktails and snacks, including salads and pizza. $$

Doyuran Ev, Kücükdeniz Sevgi Yolu 34, Eski Foça, ☎ 0232-8122513, has a good local reputation for the quality of the meat used in its oversized portions of kebabs. *Mezes* are also available. $

Fokia Balik Restaurant, Kücükdeniz Sahil Caddesi 11, Eski Foça, ☎ 0232-8122186, is considered to be the best fish restaurant in the town. It has outside tables at the end of the promontory where you can watch cats eagerly awaiting the return of the fishing boats. $$

Foça Restaurant, Sahil Caddesi 56, Eski Foça, ☎ 0232-8121307. You can expect friendly service at this fish restaurant located at the start of the harbor in Foça town center. $$

IZMIR

Izmir is renowned for its seafood restaurants selling locally caught or farmed fish such as *cipura*. The best place to go for cheap restaurants is the Kordon Boyu promenade.

Bonjour, 1387 Sokak 3, Alsancak, ☎ 0232-4210529, serves classy Mediterranean dishes. $$

Chinese Restaurant, 1379 Sokak 57a, Alsancak, ☎ 0232-4830079, is located just behind the Hilton Hotel. It has a wide selection of meat, fish, rice and noodle dishes. $$

Deniz, 1 Kordon, Alsancak, ☎ 0232-4220601. As its name suggests (*deniz* means "sea"), everything on offer at this restaurant comes from the sea. This is considered Izmir's best seafood eatery. $$$

Naci Usta Restaurant, Çeşme Yeni Otoyolo 154/1, Balçova, ☎ 0232-2394101, is a classic locals' restaurant and is known more for its view. Tables are set outside in a garden overlooking the sea. The food is decent, with a selection of *mezes* and fish. $$

Kücükkuyu, Alp Balik Lokantasi, Süleyman Sakalli 49, Kücükkuyu, ☎ 0286-7525304. From the street, this fish restaurant looks like little more than a fishmonger's. At the rear, there is a lovely canteen overlooking the fishing harbor where your dinner will be caught. There is also a range of *meze* dishes. $$

South Aegean

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

■ BY AIR

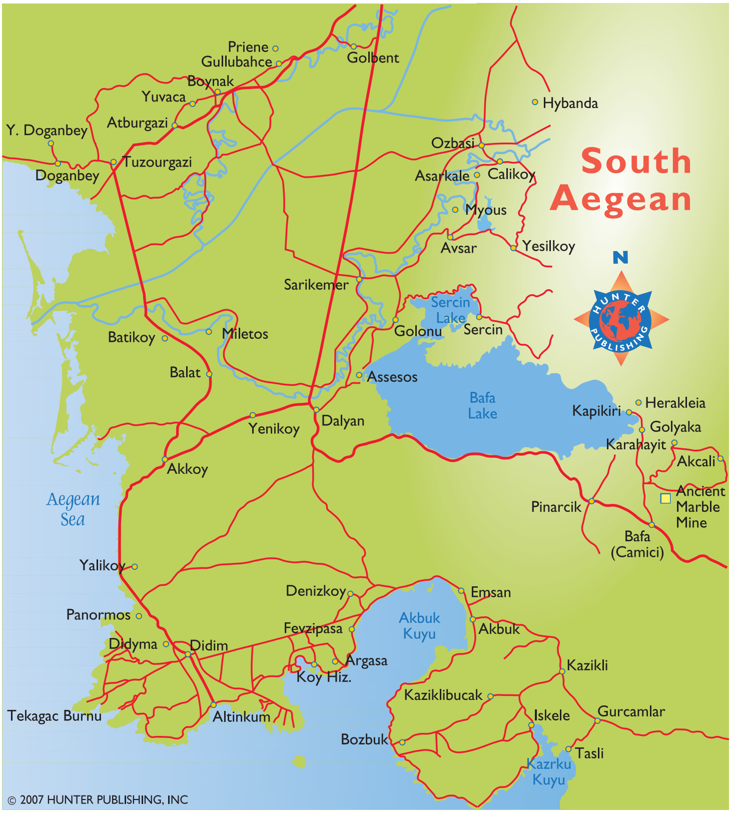
The modern, international **Bodrum-Milas Airport** (BJV) sits on a peninsula 36 km/22 miles northeast of Bodrum and 16 km/10 miles south of Milas. It has a good range of shops and cafés. The domestic terminal, which used to be the main airport, is one km/.6 miles away.

TRAVEL TO DOWNTOWN BODRUM

Turkish Airlines provides its own shuttle service from the airport into Bodrum town center.

Havaş (☎ 0252-5230040) buses run from the airport to the bus terminal in the center of Bodrum. They are timed to coincide with Turkish Airlines' domestic timetable. The fare costs $9.

By car, the newly widened **D-330** highway runs from the airport to downtown.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Taxis (www.bodrumairporttaxi.com) at the airport have fixed fares to 48 towns in the region. The fare into Bodrum town center is $50; taxis to Kuşadasi cost $110.

MAJOR ROADS

The **E-87** highway runs south from Izmir before heading inland past Aydin to Denizli. The **D-550** runs south from Izmir, passing the town of Selçuk for Ephesus, before turning southeast towards the city of Muğla. Here, it turns into the **D-400** and forks into two routes: one goes to Dalaman International Airport, while the other heads to Marmaris and Datça.

The **D-525** connects the ancient cities of Priene, Miletos and Didyma, before running past Lake Bafa to the city of Milas. Past Milas, the **D-330** runs along the Bodrum Peninsula.

BY TRAIN

The Aegean coast is not well served by trains. The only long-distance route of any note is the ***Pamukkale Express*** from Istanbul to Denizli for Pamukkale. It departs from Istanbul's Haydarpaşa at 5:35pm and arrives in Denizli at 8:20am.

Trains connect Izmir's Alsancak station with **Selçuk** six times a day. The first train departs from Alsancak at 7:35am and the final train departs at 9:30pm. The journey takes just over two hours. Three of the trains continue beyond Selçuk to Denizli for Pamukkale. The first of these trains departs at 10:37am and arrives in Denizli at 2:14pm. The others depart from Selçuk after 5pm, useful if you want to visit Ephesus before heading to Denizli for a trip to the hot springs the following day.

BY BUS

If you are on a budget, then traveling down the Aegean Coast by bus is so cheap and easy that it is not worth splashing out on a car, unless you are in a hurry or want the freedom to explore villages without hanging around for connecting *dolmuses.*

Buses from Istanbul to Kuşadasi take nine hours, while the bus from Ankara takes an hour longer. The fare for either journey will be less than $20. To travel between Kuşadasi and other Aegean towns you will probably need to change in Aydin. Kuşadasi's bus station is less than a kilometer outside the town center. *Dolmuses* regularly run between the bus station and the shopping center and port area before heading to the beaches.

You can get to Bodrum by bus from almost anywhere in Turkey. The overnight bus to Bodrum takes 12 hours from Istanbul and from Ankara.

BY SEA

© Bodrum Ferry Boat Assoc

Ferries operated by the **Bodrum Ferryboat Association** (☎ 0252-3160882, www.bodrumferryboat.com) make the two-hour crossing from Bodrum to Korman, on the Datça Peninsula, twice daily during the summer at 9am and 5pm. In winter, the service runs twice weekly. The ferry is a speedy way of making the trip down to Datça. Shuttle buses travel the 6.5 km/four miles to Datça from Korman. A single crossing on the ferry costs $9, a return ticket is $16; you will pay an additional $28 to take a car.

Bodrum Express Lines (www.bodrumexpresslines.com) operates a hydrofoil service between Bodrum and Marmaris. You actually sail to the harbor town of Gelibolu in the Gulf of Gökova and travel for 20 minutes by bus to Marmaris. The hydrofoil departs twice a day from Bodrum at 8am and 6pm every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. The journey takes an hour and 15 minutes. One-way tickets cost $32. There is a huge discount for buying a return ticket.

© Bodrum Express Lines

Ferryboats and hydrofoils also make daily trips from Bodrum to the Greek islands of Kos and Kalymnos. Both ferries take takes an hour and tickets cost $29. The Kalymnos ferry leaves Bodrum at 10am and the Kos ferry departs at 9:30am. The hydrofoil whizzes across to Kos in 20 minutes. It sails Monday to Saturday at 9:30am and tickets cost $42. ☎ 0252-3160882, www.bodrumferry boat.com.

BY TAXI & *DOLMUS*

Yellow taxis run on meters according to the time of day. Fares between midnight and 6am are 25% more expensive. If you are traveling between districts you can bargain for a flat rate fare.

The Aegean Coast has an extensive *dolmus* service, with services departing from major bus terminals (*otogar*) and marked stops in city centers. The minibuses are clean and frequent, though few have air conditioning. In Bodrum, orange minibuses run in the downtown area, while blue and white ones travel between the provinces. They all run from early until late into the evening, with fares starting at $1.

SIGHTSEEING

SELÇUK

Two landmarks dominate the town of Selçuk: a fortress overlooking a weave of old houses where generations of families sit in the lanes, and,

Selçuk fortress

at the bottom of the hill, a lively food market that spans the town's center.

Selçuk earns its income from travelers who spend a night while exploring the grand dame of ancient cities, Ephesus (three km/two miles away). The town is unworried by the crowds who descend each summer and it is a pleasant place to wander around free of harassment from shop owners.

The **Ephesus Museum** (Tuesday to Sunday 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) has an impressive collection of relics gathered from the site. The most famous exhibits in the museum's seven rooms are the statue of Eros on a dolphin and the two statues of Artemis. Among the vivid mosaics unearthed in the city's houses are Medusa and Dionysos.

> *An amusing fresco depicting the philosopher Socrates with a tray of fruit covering his essential anatomy draws a lot of attention from visitors.*

Tomb of St. John the Apostle

From the museum, head towards the castle where the fifth-century **Basilica of St. John** stands at the foot of the mound. St. John is believed to have sought refuge here and wrote his gospel after being cast out of Jerusalem. He was buried in the grounds where a wooden basilica was first constructed before being replaced by the present church.

Families and train buffs may want to head 15 minutes south of Selçuk to **Camlik**, where a train museum displays over 30 retired steam engines. Tren Muzesi, ☎ 0232-8948118; open 8am-8pm; entrance fee.

EPHESUS (EFES) ☆☆☆

Ephesus is the largest and best-preserved ancient city in the country and is one of the world's most spectacular historical treasures. Some historical sites live only in a visitor's imagination. They demand great knowledge of ancient rulers, archaeology, myths and legends in order

Opposite: Entering the great city of Ephesus (© Explore)

to rebuild a city's fragmented walls and temples in your mind and envisage life among its streets. Ephesus requires little invention to see what a functioning Greco-Roman city would have looked like.

THE HISTORY OF EPHESUS

The origins of the city are unclear. According to one legend, Androclos, the son of King Kodros of Athens, had consulted an Apollon oracle for advice on where to build a new city. He was told a fish, a fire and a boar would lead him to the site. One day, while frying his supper and contemplating the advice, a fish fell from the pan and scattered burning coals on to a bush where a boar had been hiding. Androclos pursued the boar to the site of Ephesus, where he killed it. He then established his city at the mouth of the Cayster River and became the first king of Ephesus.

By the sixth century BC, Ephesus was prosperous enough to prompt King Croesus of Lydia to mount an assault in 560BC. The Lydian Army captured the city without a struggle. Work on the original **Temple of Artemis** had already begun and Croesus helped to pay for the structure to please the locals and the goddess. He contributed a set of columns, one of which has his name inscribed on it. These are now on display in London's British Museum.

Artemis Temple (© Adam Carr)

After the Lydians, control passed to the Persian Empire. It was during this time that a maniac called Herostratus, seeking to make his name immortal, burned down part of the Temple of Artemis. The goddess was reputedly too busy helping with the birth of Alexander the Great to save her sacred temple.

The Ephesians immediately began work on an even more graceful structure, which won acclaim as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The new temple was an enormous, gleaming marble building set within a great courtyard and surrounded on all sides by a colonnade. Pilgrims and tourists alike revered it.

Work on the temple was still in progress when, at the age of 22, Alexander the Great arrived after overthrowing the Persians. He offered to pay for its completion if his name was inscribed in the building. The request was diplomatically refused because it was considered improper for one god to offer gifts to another. However, money and worship did go hand in hand and the temple was famed as much for its treasury as its sanctuary.

> *The Temple of Artemis was immortalized in Shakespeare's play* The Comedy of Errors *and in Salvador Dali's painting,* The Temple of Diana at Ephesus.

Ephesus continued to thrive after Alexander's death during successive wars and power struggles. In 133BC, the city passed to Augustus, who made it the capital of Roman Asia Minor succeeding Pergamon. From 100BC to about 100AD, it was the center of the slave trade and the most important port and commercial trading center in Anatolia. It had a population of between 200,000 and 250,000.

In the first century, St Paul visited Ephesus and preached the new religion of Christianity in the amphitheater before being exiled. He found few takers among citizens still loyal to the worship of Artemis. His failure was in part due to an inspired rally by local jewelry makers, fearful that the new religion would halt sales of their silver statues of Artemis.

The power of Artemis was weakened in 262 when the Goths sacked the city and wrecked her temple. Today, all that remains of the sanctuary is one Ionian column nestled between a few scattered stones in a waterlogged field.

After the temple's destruction, Christianity spread rapidly and Ephesus became a seat of a church council in 431. The city went into decline during the Byzantine era and was eventually abandoned after the silting up of the harbor.

TOURING THE RUINS

To reach Ephesus (☎ 0232-8926402; www.ephesus guide.com; open daily 8am-7pm in summer; closes at 4:30pm in winter; entrance fee) by car, follow **D-550** south from Izmir to Selçuk, where you head west for three km/two miles on **Route 515**. The turn that leads to the ruins is just before a small airstrip. Regular *dolmus* taxis leave from Kuşadasi (19 km/12 miles) and Selçuk. Buses from Izmir take about one hour 20 minutes.

Ephesus is crammed with amphitheater, murals and mosaics, baths, columns, fountains and brothels. The chariot-worn streets lead to the highlights: the Library of Celsus, the Temple of Hadrian and the imposing theater.

Start a tour of Ephesus at the **Lower Gate**, entering, as ancient guests would have, along Harbor Street. It was the grandest entrance to the city; mosaics covered the floor and columns lined the street. It was all designed for maximum impact, so people knew the city's importance.

> *It was every woman's dream to go to Ephesus because it was glamorous and had the best shops and the most powerful men. Mark Anthony and Cleopatra spent their honeymoon here. The city had baths near the entrance walls so people could bathe before going in if they had been on a long journey.*

The **Harbor Bath and Gymnasium** complex is the largest at Ephesus. It had a mosaic-paved courtyard leading into a portal, flanked by bulls' heads, with two pools. Facilities included a two-storey gymnasium and a stadium. Behind the baths is the **Church of the Virgin Mary**, the first church to be dedicated to the Virgin.

THE THEATER: As you continue straight, ahead is the three-tier amphitheater with seating for a staggering 25,000 people. The acoustics here are wonderful, as exemplified by the many visitors who stand on

the stage to sing or shout. During Greek times, the amphitheater did not have a stage building. The Romans added this at a great height to stop the audience's attention from drifting off into their surroundings. The actors performing in plays would enter through the tunnels at each side of the stage.

The amphitheater began life in the third century BC with large, smooth stones laid by the Greeks. The Romans added intricately carved marble. The Byzantines, who used the amphitheater until the seventh century AD, left their mark in red bricks.

From the amphitheater, walk down the Marble Road away from the harbor. Halfway down, on the right, is a carving of a woman marked on the floor, directing men to the brothel. There's also a carving of a foot; if a boy's foot was as big as the carving, he was old enough to visit the brothel. Ephesus attracted an eclectic mix of people, from philosophers to poets, artists, musicians and athletes. Such a cultural hive also brought playboys and prostitutes.

Marble Road

In Roman times, working in a brothel was a respected profession, like being a Geisha or one of the chosen few in the Ottoman harem. For men, being a gladiator was a glamorous occupation akin with being a racing driver today.

THE LIBRARY OF CELSUS: The most photogenic and crowded building at Ephesus is the great library, which has an ornamental white marble façade raised on a high plinth. Consul Aquila built the library in 135 AD in honor of his father Celsus, who was a governor. His tomb was placed in a crypt below the central niche.

The library had three main portals behind a series of columns. Next to the entrances are statues of female figures representing the virtues of wisdom, fate and intelligence. Niches on the interior of the building were designed to hold its vast selection of books. When the library was built, it was the third largest in the world. It soon became the biggest.

The library had three stories, although there is no evidence of any stairs. This may mean there were elevators worked by hand and wheels. To the right of the library are arches leading into the **agora**, a

Celcius Library (image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

market and gathering place that was dedicated to Augustus by the slaves who he set free. The main produce was spice. Behind the agora was the **Temple of Serapis** with its Corinthian columns each weighing 57 tons.

CURETES STREET: From the library, the route curves into Curetes Street, the ceremonial road named after the band of six priests who were responsible for keeping the flame alight in the holy section of the Town Hall.

Curetes Street

Look out for the many marble sarcophagi, or coffins, along the road. People would be buried with gold coins on their eyes as a tip for the man who would take them into the next world. The coins were too much for some people to resist and created the problem of grave robberies.

At the axis of Curetes Street and Marble Road is the **brothel**, probably one of the few in the world that boasted mosaics on the floor and frescoes on the walls. It formed a complex with the **Scholastikia Baths**, which was restored in the fifth century by the lady whose headless statue stands by the entrance.

In the first section of the complex are latrines, where inhabitants of the city sat side by side on the open toilets. The marble was so cold that slaves would be sent to warm the seats. At least the toilets were eco-friendly. Dirty water from the baths would be used to flush the toilets.

THE TEMPLE OF HADRIAN: Next to the baths is the Temple of Hadrian dating from 138AD. It's one of the best-preserved buildings in the city. The four columns support a bust of Tyche, the Goddess of Victory.

Temple of Hadrian

Opposite are the ruins of Roman **terraced houses**, which also sported mosaics and frescoes. These were the homes of the city's wealthy citizens and were built on a hill to give an equal view. On the lower level would have been expensive shops selling silks, spices, soaps and perfumes.

At the end of the road is **Hercules Gate**, signifying the end of the common part of the city. Two statues of Hercules guard the gate. From here, you enter a courtyard with an agora and, next to it, the **Domitian Temple**. Domitian treated the Christians badly and exiled St. Paul. The city's people hated him and, after his death, they destroyed the temple. In the square, look for the reliefs of Nike, the Goddess of Victory, and a snake, the symbol of medicine.

Next to the agora is another **amphitheater**. Smaller than the main site, it seated 1,000 people and was used for council meetings. Continue along the road to the **Magnesian Gate**, the only gate that has survived.

THE HOUSE OF THE VIRGIN MARY ✫

From Ephesus, head back in the direction of the main road and turn right to the **Cave of the Seven Sleepers**, where seven Christians hid to escape persecution. They fell into a deep sleep and awoke 200 years later to find Christianity was the official religion. The story is more evocative than the ruin.

Beyond the cave, turn right again for the House of the Virgin Mary (open 8am-7pm; entrance fee). Jesus entrusted care of the Virgin Mary to John, who built a house for her in a vast, secluded forest. The chapel on the site has been completely restored without spoiling its atmosphere. Mary spent the remainder of her days at the house at about 37 to 45 AD. It was recognized as a shrine by the Vatican in 1967 and mass is celebrated here at 7:30am and 10:30am on Sunday. Be sure to drink from one of the three fountains in the garden representing love, wealth and happiness. The Virgin Mary is said to have drunk from the water.

House of the Virgin Mary

SIRINCE

A more potent tipple can be found high above Selçuk in the village of Sirince (eight km/five miles from Selçuk). The village was a sanctuary for Greeks in the dying days of Ephesus. A precarious mountain road leads into a hillside of half-timber houses overlooking vineyards and olive trees. Roam around the cobbled lanes past old Greek mansions and churches, before making a tour of the wooden cabins at the side of the road where delicious homemade fruit wine is sold. You can have your own tasting any time of day. It takes 15 minutes to reach the village by *dolmus* from Selçuk.

KUSADASI

The route from Selçuk towards the coastal resort of Kuşadasi passes through cotton fields, pine and citrus forests. Kuşadasi is one of the Aegean's more upmarket resorts, set in a gulf with wide beaches and a harbor flanked by boutiques and bistros. The town has few historical monuments, but plenty of opportunities for shopping and hanging out in style.

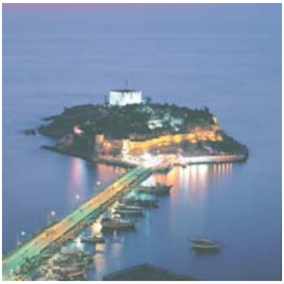


Image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board

Lighted fortress

Kuşadasi means "Bird Island" and, appropriately, the town's main attraction, a 19th-century **fortress**, lies out on Dove Island (Güvercin Adasi). The island is connected to the mainland by a causeway, allowing you to walk out to the castle and its well-tended gardens. From the harbor, the island looks serene and romantic, especially when it is floodlit. A stroll out to there at night will prove otherwise. The fortress has a thumping disco within its walls.

BEACHES

Heading in from Selçuk, the first beach you come to is the long, curved swathe of sand at **Pamucak Beach**. Many Turkish beaches plunge steeply, making them deep close to the shore, but Pamucak is shallow for quite a distance out. The beach is less crowded than those closer to the city center.

The powdery sand of **Ladies Beach** and **Long Beach** are the most popular places to stretch out under a parasol. *Dolmuses* (shared taxis) run from the harbor out to the beaches every five minutes during the summer.

If you cannot stand the crush of the public beaches, join the hip set in one of the beach clubs along the gulf. **Jade** and **Necco** are the trendiest. Jade Beach Club has swimming and sunbathing decks and a wealth of sports facilities. The smaller Necco has a private beach and a garden where sun loungers and oversized cushions are scattered. Both clubs (entrance fee) have restaurants and turn into nightclubs in the evening. They are next to each other in the Snake Island district, between Kuşadasi and Ladies Beach.

If you prefer something less flashy, head 30 km/19 miles south of Kuşadasi to **Dilek Yarimadasi Milli Parki** (open daily 8am-6:30pm; entrance fee; *dolmuses* depart every 30 minutes from Kuşadasi), a national park where you can walk through the shade of red and black pines to Içmeler Bay and its fabulous sandy beach. Turtles and seals – both protected species – breed around the bays. Turning inland, stop at the beautiful village of **Doğanbey** on the fringe of the park.

From Kuşadasi, take route 515 south past the town of Söke, before heading southwest for 15 km/nine miles to the Ionian ruins of Priene.

PRIENE

> **TIP:** *Many visitors come to Priene as part of a tour that also combines Miletos and Didyma. This can mean rushing around the sites. If possible, plan to spend a night in Didyma.*

In the eighth century BC, Priene (open daily 8:30am-7:30pm in summer; closes at 5:30pm in winter; entrance fee) was one of the main players in the Ionian League. The powerful group's meeting place, the Panionion, lay within Priene's territories.

Priene originally lay along the mouth of the Maeander River and was a thriving port until the river silted up. By 350 BC, inhabitants were forced to move farther inland to the present site.

Temple of Athena Polias

The new city was laid out in a strict geometric grid plan designed by architect Hippodamus and is one of the most beautiful examples of Greek town planning. The remains lie on successive terraces that climb from a plain to a steep hill, where the **Temple of Athena Polias** stands. Built by Pytheos, the architect of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the temple was recognized in ancient times as a classic example of the pure Ionic style.

Below the temple is one of the best-preserved theaters from the Hellenistic period. Plays would be performed here in honor of the gods and sacrifices were carried out on the altar in the center. Look for the seats of honor at the front of the theater. The oversized chairs were cut out of great chunks of marble and had carved armrests to ensure the comfort of VIPs. An agora and an assembly hall stand in the center of the city and a gymnasium and stadium occupy the lowest section.

> **TIP:** *The ruins of Priene and Miletos are sinking into vegetation, making them wonderfully romantic from a distance. Up close, they are a threat to exposed flesh. I recommend travelers wear trousers and a T-shirt when visiting the sites to avoid having shredded skin.*

MILETOS (MILET)

Like Priene, the present-day ruins at Miletos were laid out according to the principles of Hippodamus after the Persians ravaged the original city in 494BC. The ruins (open daily 8:30am-7:30pm in summer; closes at 5:30pm in winter; entrance fee) lie in a broad plain carpeted with wildflowers in springtime. As you enter, the first sight is the **Hellenistic theater**, one of the largest in Anatolia, seating as many as 15,000 people. Opposite, is a Seljuk caravansary and the best-preserved building, the **Baths of Faustina**. The complex had a gymnasium and bathhouse dedicated to the extravagant wife of Marcus Aurelius.

Theater

To the east, there are several forlorn ruins with thick bushes and weeds growing over them. The Hellenistic stadium with its two monumental gates is partly submerged in a marsh overrun with frogs and tortoises.

DIDYMA ✪

Many grand tags are attached to Didyma's **Temple of Apollo**. It was the cultural center for Miletos; the third-largest religious center in the Hellenistic world, and the biggest oracle center in Western Anatolia. The temple is prepossessing by day and utterly enchanting in the evening, when the falling sun creates an orange and crimson backcloth and casts the marble columns in silhouette.

Excavations have shown the earliest sanctuary dates from the eighth century BC. Three centuries later, the Persians wrecked the original temple and carried off the cult statue of Apollo. When Alexander the Great freed the Ionian cities, he went to Persia to reclaim the bronze

Didyma Temple (image courtesy Turkey Tourist Baord)

statue and ordered the rebuilding of the Temple of Apollo on a formidable scale.

Didyma (20 km/12 miles south of Miletos; open daily 9am-7pm in summer; closes at 5:30pm in winter; entrance fee) is one of the smaller ancient cities and the most impressive ruins can easily be seen from the roadside. But travelers should not be tempted to scrimp on the entrance fee. The site has many interesting marble reliefs, including one of Medusa with her inimitable scowl. Wandering through the courtyards and chambers offers a constantly changing perspective on the remains.

To reach Didyma by public transport, take a bus from Izmir's central bus station to Didim and then change to a *dolmus* for the trip up the hill.

MODERN DIDIM

The area around Didyma still has the ambience of a village and is infinitely more charming than its modern neighbor, Didim. The coastal town has undergone such a growth spurt that it is difficult to find anything of historic interest. In summer, it is swamped by Brits who own summerhouses. Likewise, Altinkum is known locally as "Little England" and bears a passing resemblance to some of the less desirable

English seaside resorts. The restaurants along the coast have menus in English and, even worse, many of them have pictures of the food.

LAKE BAFA ✮✮

Through the mountains, east of the road between Miletos and Didyma, are the heavenly, cool waters of Lake Bafa. The rampart walls of a Byzantine church rest on an island in the freshwater lagoon.

On the eastern shore of the lake is **Kapikiri**, a village inhabited mainly by the descendants of nomads. The village is alive at dawn break when the first call to prayer fires an unwelcome ensemble of noises from cockerels, donkeys and dogs. A pathway leads from the village down a rocky slope to a sandy beach beside the lake.

© Samantha Lafferty

Steeple in the sky, a Byzantine church above Lake Bafa

> **TIP:** *Plenty of buses depart from Izmir heading to the south coast resorts of Bodrum and Marmaris. These are fast ways of getting to Lake Bafa. Just ask to be dropped at Pinarcik or Çamiçi and walk or hitch a lift around the lake.*

Kapikiri's main trade is organic produce and its fields are stocked with citrus fruits, cotton and olives. Amid the pastures is **Endymion's shrine**, which locals say was left uncovered so his lover, Selene, could still caress him. There are also relics from the city of Herakleia, including a temple dedicated to Athena and city walls that shoot up towards the wild Besparmak Mountains. These days, women sit on the ancient marble columns to knit and embroider.

At the end of the first century BC, the historian Strabo speaks of the wealth and beauty of the Carian city of Herakleia, then a port on the Bay of Latmos. In time, when its outlet to the sea was cut off, the city became impoverished and was eventually abandoned.

The lake has some wonderful trekking opportunities (see *Adventures on Foot*, page 294). High in the Besparmak Mountains, you can climb to Neolithic rocks that, amazingly, still have paintings of a shaman and sheep-like characters meant to symbolize women. There are also the well-preserved walls of a Byzantine monastery built by monks from Yemen and the Sinai Peninsula who settled here to take advantage of the seclusion of the Latmos Mountains. Nearby, a mushroom-shaped rock has incredible frescoes of Christ.

© Samantha Lafferty

Frescoes hidden under a rock

THE ROAD TO PAMUKKALE

If you are touring the ancient cities along the western coast of Turkey, break up the trip by taking a detour to one of the country's foremost natural wonders. It is possible to see the ancient spa in a day trip from Izmir or Selçuk by picking up the E-87 highway. Alternately, take a bus or train from Izmir or Selçuk to Denizli, where you will have to change on to a *dolmus* for the remaining 20 km/12 mile journey to Pamukkale. Retrace your route if you do not want to miss any of the sites along the coast.

The landscape here is particularly pretty. The route crosses the Büyük Menderes Valley past vineyards and tobacco plantations. Fig, apple and cherry trees fill the fields and Babadağ (Father Mountain) towers in the distance.

If you have more time, there are some interesting ruins to stop at along the way. To the west of Aydin, 63 km/39 miles from Kuşadasi, is

Tralleis, although all that remains are the arches of a gymnasium. About 34 km/31 miles along the same road, near the town of Sultanhisar, is **Nysa**. A stream runs through the ancient city and is flanked by a well-preserved Roman library and theater. In the foothills of Babadağ lies the ancient city of Aphrodisias, 37 km/23 miles south of the E-87 highway.

APHRODISIAS

Named after the Goddess of Love and Beauty, the Temple of Aphrodite, Baths of Hadrian and 30,000-seater stadium at the city of Aphrodisias deserve to be explored. The site has been settled since at least the Early Bronze Age and some parts may have been occupied in the Neolithic Age. The city reached the height of its prosperity during Roman times, when it was a cultural and artistic center.

The most beautiful of the ruins is the **Tetrapylon monumental gate**. Nearby are remains of the **Temple of Aphrodite** dating from the late Hellenistic period. Aphrodite was worshipped alongside Cybele, the Anatolian Mother Goddess, as a fertility symbol. The temple was converted into a Christian church in the fifth century. The giant **Stadium of Aphrodisias** was used as an arena for gladiatorial and animal combat.

Tetrapylon munumental gate

The museum at the entrance to the site is worth a visit. The Aphrodisians were renowned for their sculpture and a comprehensive selection is on display.

The city is open daily 9am-6:30pm in summer; the museum is open 9am-6:30pm; both sites close at 5pm in winter; separate entrance fees.

© Levork

Temple of Aphrodite

PAMUKKALE ☆☆☆

In 1765, English scholar Richard Chandler was traveling through Asia Minor when he "beheld with wonder" the "immense frozen cascade." Chandler had stumbled upon one of the world's most spellbinding natural wonders.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The mineral-rich waters of Pamukkale, meaning "Cotton Castle," had a reputation for healing spanning thousands of years. Emperors Nero and Hadrian came to drink and bathe in the waters. UNESCO listed Pamukkale (open 24 hours; entrance fee) and the ruins of the ancient spa city of **Hierapolis** (open daily 8am-7pm in summer; entrance fee) as a World Heritage Site in 1988. Until then, only intrepid travelers came to see the frozen falls and paddle in the Sacred Spring with a view of ancient columns and tombs. Now, hordes of tourists come to see the travertines, bringing with them noise and pollution. So much so that it is no longer possible to wade in the pools. You can, however, still swim in the Sacred Pool at the Pamukkale Termal (open dawn until 11:30pm; entrance fee).

Pamukkale's terraces are derived from hot volcanic springs that bubble on a plateau 200 m/650 feet above them. The water is laden with lime and other minerals that have flowed down the southern slope of Caldağ, building up deposits on the mountain. The water accumulates in pools and, as these fill up, they overflow into smaller pools, creating scalloped-edged walls and stalactites.

Collonades ar Hierapolis

Many visitors to Pamukkale spend their day marveling at the natural phenomenon without scouting around Hierapolis. Eumenes II, the King of Pergamon, built the city in 190BC on the plateau where the springs rise. Two of the most interesting ruins are the **Temples of Pluto and Apollo**, which were placed side by side to balance the forces of dark and light. The dark powers of Pluto were said to emanate in the form of poisonous fumes from a cave on the site. The fumes are now known to come from a hot spring.

THE ROAD TO BODRUM

Routes 525 and **330** between Lake Bafa and Bodrum cross surprisingly quaint hamlets where locals tout an odd mix of homemade honey and stuffed sheep at the side of the road. All the while, donkeys, almost lost under their load of olive branches, trudge past.

MILAS

Often a town overlooked by fun-seekers on their way down to Bodrum, Milas is a smart market town. Many of the Ottoman houses have been revamped and stand gracefully on the wide, palm-tree lined boulevards. It is worth visiting the Roman gate known as the **Gate With an Axe** after its double-headed axe carved into its stone.

The **museum** (Koptular Sokak 6, ☎ 0252-5123973; open Tuesday-Sunday 8am-5pm; entrance fee) has some finds uncovered at ancient Iassos and Euromos.

The Corinthian **Temple of Zeus** at **Euromos** (open daily 8:30am-7pm; entrance fee) is 13 km/eight miles north of Milas.

Bodrum's famous castle is illuminated at night (image courtesy Turkey Tourist Board)

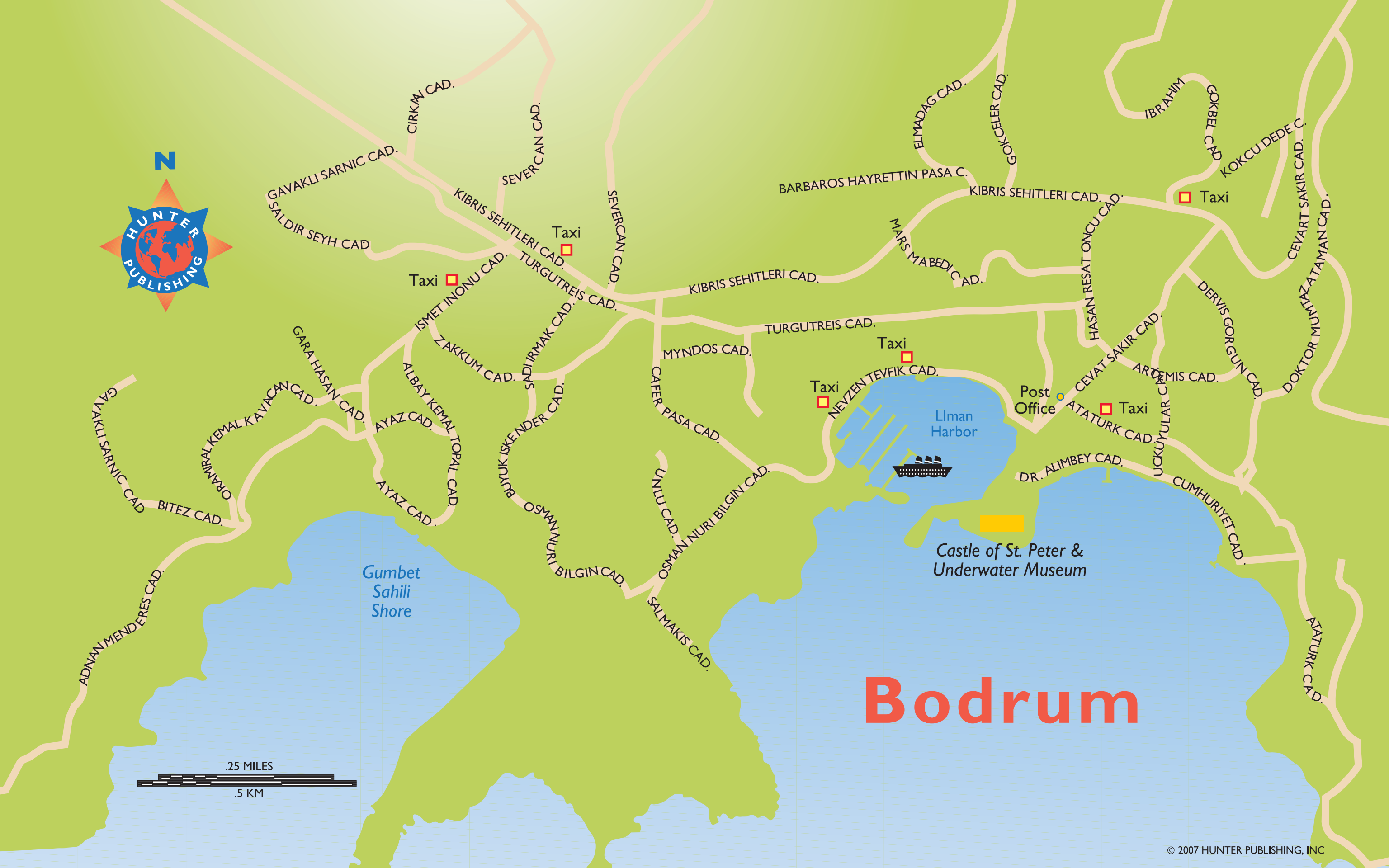
BODRUM ☆☆

South of Milas, through a tableau of olive-green hillsides and rocky inlets lapped by the blue waters of the Aegean Sea, is Turkey's premier seaside retreat, Bodrum.

In the 1960s, Bodrum was an isolated fishing village connected to the outside world only by boat. Its residents relied on fishing, sponge diving and trade with the Greek island of Rhodes. Everything changed in the 1980s with the opening of the international airport. Bodrum is now home to the famed Blue Cruise on wooden gulets (traditional Turkish boats) and is known as the sail and party capital of Turkey.

Tourism has brought shopping complexes and a real estate boom to the peninsula. The prevailing image is still whitewashed stucco homes draped in purple bougainvillea and framed by dry, rocky mountains. In the harbor, hundreds of pin-straight sailing masts surround the 15th-century Castle of St. Peter.

A strip of elegant bars and restaurants along the marina attests to Bodrum's sophisticated air. The city also has a thriving package holiday trade with twenty-somethings packed into noisy bars.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CASTLE OF ST. PETER (SEN PIYER KALESI)

If partying until dawn is not your scene, Bodrum does possess a few sites to keep history buffs happy. The most prominent, the Castle of St. Peter, commands the harbor. Its battlements and fortress walls are still intact and wonderfully illuminated at night.

© Jan McGready

The Knights of St. John built the castle in 1402 and refortified it at the end of the century using remnants plundered from the fabled Mausoleum. The castle once lay on an island before it was connected to the mainland, splitting the harbor in half. Interestingly, the fortress was the last stronghold of the Christians before the Ottomans forced them to abandon it.

Passing through seven gates, you come to the inner sanctum of the castle where the **Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology** is housed (☎ 0252-3162516, open daily 8:30am-5:30pm; entrance fee). The prize exhibit is the wreck of a sixth-century ship, believed to be one of the world's oldest. Another wreck is known as the Glass Shipwreck because of the horde of glass bottles and other items recovered from it. The boat sank in the 11th century after hitting rocks off Serce.

MAUSOLEUM AT HALICARNASSOS

One of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Mausoleum was an immense, lavishly decorated tomb for Maussollos, the ruler of Caria. Maussollos' kingdom, which he had moved to Halicarnassos (modern Bodrum), was under the ultimate rule of the Persians. They had taken control of Asia Minor after defeating the Lydians. The Persians preferred to rule from afar through a *satrap*, or governor. Maussollos was one such governor.

Maussollos married his sister Artemisia and, after his death, she commissioned the Mausoleum. The resting place is believed to have taken about 20 years to construct and was completed in 350 BC. The pyramid-shaped building must have been dazzling with its white marble and blue limestone. Artemisia ordered the best sculptors to carve statues of lions and chariot horses, and friezes of figures in battle. She also commissioned colossal statues of Maussollos and herself.

Looting by the Knights of St. John and excavations in the mid-19th century by Sir Charles Newton, who took his trove to the British Museum in London, barely spared the foundations of the Mausoleum. The knights even opened up and pillaged the tomb-chamber. Locals have since scavenged the stumpy remains and slotted them into their houses.

There is little to see, but if you want to walk on the sad remains, you can reach the Mausoleum (open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) on the Gümüslük road from Bodrum.

On a hill above the city, next to a busy highway, is a **theater** also dating from the reign of Maussollos. It has been perfectly reconstructed and offers an inspiring view of the castle and boats sailing in and out of the harbor. It must have been difficult for the 13,000-strong audience to concentrate on the plays and sacrifices offered to Dionysos.

TOURING THE BODRUM PENINSULA

For seven months of the year, Bodrum is a delight. Its back streets are peaceful and shady, and you can find secluded corners in the harbor to sit and contemplate the view. During the summer, the pace of life is frenetic. To escape, head for the interior of the peninsula where villages are touched by bohemia rather than tourism, and sandy inlets ring the coast.

Gümbet, the first stop along the peninsula, does not provide much relief from Bodrum. It is just three km/1.8 miles west of its larger neighbor and has become something of an overspill. Gümbet bursts at the seams in high season. By day, its adoring followers pack the white-sand beach, which wraps around the bay. Chic beach clubs like **Fuga** have opened to cater to them. When the sun dips down, the town becomes a neon blaze.

Set amid citrus and olive groves, **Bitez** is just 10 km/six miles from Bodrum. On the coast, there is a long, sandy beach used as a hub for watersports. Low-priced hotels and cafés throng the main street. Away from the coast in rural Bitez, a weave of narrow lanes cross a dry riverbed.

Ortakent is similarly split in half. The village is known for its tangerine orchards and the cove for its sheltered waters.

In the southwest corner of the peninsula, **Akyarlar** was until recently a fishing village. Now, tour boats have replaced the fishing fleets. The village has lost none of its charm or its greenery.

Like Bodrum, **Turgutreis** has expanded rapidly. The advantage is that you can now choose to stay in the town and enjoy its shops and restaurants, rather than trek the 18 km/11 miles back to Bodrum. Turgutreis has almost three km/1.8 miles of sandy beach close to the town center and some hidden coves that can be explored by boat. **Karaincir** (Black Fig) beach, especially, deserves to be discovered.

Heading north along the peninsula is the avant-garde village of **Gümüslük**. Fir trees, citrus groves and a constant breeze rank it among the loveliest villages on the peninsula. Adding to its charms are an enclosed bay and great fresh fish sold at wooden shacks. Gümüslük also offers visitors the chance to walk on water on the sunken ruins of **Myndos**. It was at Myndos that Brutus and his fellow conspirators plotted to kill Julius Caesar. Brutus also hid there after the assassination.

Both Gümüslük and nearby **Kaya** are gaining a reputation for their yoga communes with classes to enhance the mind and body. The real beauty of Gümüslük is that the entrance to the village is concealed, meaning many people drive past it.

© Samantha Lafferty

SWANKY GETAWAYS

The opening of the Xuma beach club is reflective of **Yalikavak's** well-heeled clientele. Once a sponge-diving village, Yalikavak has a stylish new marina and is considered an exclusive retreat from the hoi polloi in Bodrum.

The real estate explosion that has attacked other parts of the peninsula has affected Yalikavak. Fortunately, the new houses have not ravaged its landscape. Rampant vegetation makes the town look as if it has been dipped in orange, lemon and olive groves.

Another reprieve for wealthy Turks is **Göltürkbükü**, 14 km/ nine miles from Bodrum. The wonderful beach and scenery are somewhat spoiled by the plague of advertising and the "see and be seen" atmosphere. Much less contrived is the inland village of **Gündogan**. The village is essentially a residential area with some upmarket holiday homes and hotels. There are hiking routes and a horse farm in the hills.

Torba is tucked into a v-shaped inlet, giving it a naturally sheltered harbor and a dramatic mountain backdrop. Its pebble beach, which offer the ruins of a church, is cramped in high summer with guests from five-star hotels. The rest of the year it is tranquil and laid back.

Heading away from Bodrum into the bays around the Gökova Körfezi is **Cleopatra's Island** (entrance fee), named because it was Mark Anthony and Cleopatra's favorite place to rendezvous. To make the beach more comfortable for his bride, Mark Anthony shipped over tons of fine sand from Egypt. Olive groves and pine forests enclose the beach, making it striking and secluded.

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON WHEELS

CYCLING TOURS

Ditching the car in favor of two wheels is a great way to explore the Bodrum Peninsula. Traveling by bike will make you more accessible to locals and enable you to take in the scenery at a slower pace. And if you rely on the bus to get about, hiring a bike for a couple of days will mean you have the freedom to stop off at places without hanging around for the next connection.

The southern Aegean has plenty to offer experienced cyclists. The mountainous region has some difficult uphill climbs that are rewarded with fantastic downhill rides.

Cyclists looking for a serious test should sign up for the mammoth 18-day, 800-km/500-mile **Aegean Cycle Tour** operated by **Akbuk Kiwi Adventure** (☎ 0536-3073470, www.akbukkiwi.com). The company is the brainchild of Mark Varvazovsky, a former judo coach who has trained multisport athletes in kayaking and mountain biking at New Zealand's top sports school. The trip starts in Bodrum and tours the peninsula before heading up to Akbuk, Lake Bafa and Kuşadasi, visiting the archaeological sites of Euromos and Priene. On day seven, the ride crosses Izmir and heads into Foça. Over the next few days, it covers 215 km/134 miles, visiting the ruins of Pergamon, Assos and Chryse. Finishing the North Aegean section, riders explore Troy and the Gallipoli Peninsula before traveling along the Sea of Marmara into Silivri, Turkey's premier wine region. On day 16, there is a 60 km/37-mile ride into Istanbul, the base for the next couple of days. Cyclists cover between 50 km/31 miles and 90 km/56 miles each day.

The tour runs in April-May and September-October and costs $3,200, inclusive of Trek or Giant 24-speed bikes, support vehicle, meals and accommodation, entrance to archaeological sites and guide fees. Places are limited to 10 riders.

The heavily forest **Dilek Yarimadasi Milli Parki**, south of Kuşadasi, is one of the most beautiful and secluded places for cycling and trekking (see below) on the Aegean coast. The south and east of the park have a spine of ridges that provide challenging climbs. While here, look out for wild horses, boars and jackals. Three cycling trails have been mapped out; guides are available from the visitor center (☎ 0256-6461079, www.dilekyarimadasi.com), located near Eski Doğanbey. (The park is open 8am-7pm in summer. It closes at 5pm in winter. There is an entrance fee.)

The shortest trail (15 km/nine miles) leaves Eski Doğanbey and runs through Oluklu Kanyon. The second trail (30 km/18 miles) also leaves from Eski Doğanbey and crosses the hilly, eastern fringes of the park before finishing at the Panionion, once the meeting place for the Ionian League. The longest trail (37 km/23 miles) connects Oluklu Kanyon with the Panionion. **Akbuk Kiwi Adventures** (see above) guides a 53-km/33-mile daily bike trek through the park for $90.

Ruzgar is a professional adventure sports company based in Akyaka in Gökova. It has five daily and weekly cycling trips around the Gulf of Gökova, Bodrum and Dalyan.

© Ruzgar

Its best downhill tour starts at the summit of the cliffs above the sailing resort of Gökova. The route passes through a string of villages in the mountains. Once it reaches Kiran village, riders begin their 12-km/7.5-mile descent to Turnali on the Gulf of Gökova. From Turnali, the course heads to Turuaz's base in Akyaka on the gulf. The full-day tour runs every Wednesday between April and November. It is suited to intermediate level riders and costs $37, including bike rental and safety helmet.

If you want to see more of the Aegean by bike, book a weekly tour. Ruzgar uses back roads to string together Akyaka, Bodrum and Datça before looping back to Akyaka. Participants must be able to handle daily rides of 40 km/25 miles, including dirt tracks and climbs. The tour costs $740 and includes bike hire and equipment, guides, accommodation, transfers and meals. For more details, contact **Ruzgar**, ☎ 0532-2730915 (cell phone), www.gokovaruzgar.com.

ADVENTURES ON WATER

DIVING

The Aegean Sea may not have the prestige of sites in Australia and the Egyptian Red Sea, and it cannot claim to give divers the sensation of swimming in an aquarium. That said, this warm body of water is free of strong currents and it has some of the country's best diving opportunities, including volcanic islands, caverns, reefs and some steep drop-offs. The rock formations, though not spectacular, hide groupers, bream, stingray, moray eels, octopus, barracudas and some colorful small fish. There are also seals and dolphins, though these are somewhat elusive.

Novice divers, who come here in droves, can get a taste for diving with a one-day introduction course in the Aegean's calm bays. You can take a course to become a certified diver within two days, though there is a lot to cram in. The dive season runs from April to November, with the best months being September and October when the water is warm and there are fewer people.

Sites

Bodrum is the principal gathering point for divers in the Aegean. There are 12 main dive points around the town, including islands, caves, funnels and a meteorite hole. Most of the sites are located around **Black Island**, a rocky piece of land that takes between 15 minutes and 30 minutes to reach by boat from the town's main marina. One of the island's more romantic sites is **Aksona Bay**, which takes its name from a local instructor and sponge diver, Aksona Mehmet, who has lived in the Bodrum area for 40 years. The site has several anchors and other wreck pieces.

For marine life and beautiful coral, nothing beats the **Big Reef** and nearby **Small Reef** north of the Black Island. Meanwhile, **Orak Island**, about 1½ hours from Bodrum, has an almost vertical 90-m/300-foot drop with rock formations that could have come from the moon. Before diving experts get too excited, the law restricts descents here to 30 m/100 feet.

Wreck Dives

Bodrum's seabed is littered with shipwrecks to challenge experienced divers. You only have to visit the town's **Underwater Archaeological Museum** at St. Peter's Castle to see how greedy the Aegean Sea has been over the years. One of the best options is **The Boatyard**, a 24-m/79-foot cabin cruiser off Kargi Harbor. The wreck is partially collapsed and lies as far as 32 m/105 feet underwater. The superb visibility means less experienced divers can see the wreck from a shallower depth. Divers must be accompanied by a registered dive guide to preserve artifacts.

© Aegean Pro Dive

Dive Schools

Aegean Pro Dive, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 212, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3160737, www.aegeanprodive.com, has a custom-built boat with classroom facilities to instruct people taking one of its one-day, three-day or five-day courses. Packages are available with or without equipment.

© Aegean Pro Dive

Askin Diving Center, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3164247, www.askindiving.com. Askin's chief dive instructor, Askin Canbazoglu, spent eight years making underwater excavations for the Bodrum Underwater Museum before setting up his dive school. The center runs wreck dive courses for advanced divers and has courses for all levels of experience, including PADI, CMAS and barracuda courses. There are discover scuba diving courses, open water diver/CMAS, advanced diver/CMAS, rescue diver, dive master/CMAS, as well as special courses for night diving and deep navigation. Longer dive excursions go to Fethiye, Kaş and Marmaris. The minimum age is 12 and divers must produce an up-to-date medical certificate to take a course.

© Erman Dive

Erman Dive Center has schools at the Hapimag Resort Sea Garden, Yaliçiftlik, and the Bodrum Karada Marina, ☎ 0252-3689594, www.ermandive.com. They run a comprehensive range of courses for beginners, including a classroom-based course and a discover scuba diving trial. PADI certificate courses are available for those who get the diving bug, and qualified divers can take rescue and emergency courses, plus night dives and wreck dives. Equipment can be hired separately.

© Yunnus Diving

Yunus Diving, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi, Menekse Cikmazi 36, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3165890, www.yunusscuba.com, has daily trips for beginners and experts, including night dives. There are also packages that span a couple of days and up to a week. If you want to capture the mystery of this other world on film, take one of the underwater photography and video packages.

SAILING

The Southern Aegean is the playground of Turkey. And nothing suggests playtime better than messing around on a boat. Whether you are a serious wind-in-your-face sailor or want to laze on deck, being on the water is the best way to explore the region's islands and secluded bays.

> *These waters have borne witness to some of the greatest figures of antiquity. Alexander the Great paused here to plunder the richest cities in the world. Not far from Bodrum, Anthony and Cleopatra frolicked on their private beach while Caesar gathered his fleet. In Marmaris, the gateway to the Mediterranean Sea, Süleyman the Magnificent marshaled his forces before attacking the crusading knights in their stronghold on Rhodes, and Nelson chased Napoleon retreating from Egypt.*

Sailing in Turkey brings with it a raucous social life either in the marinas or on board the boats. Cafés and stores in Bodrum, Göcek and Marmaris latched on to this party scene years ago and provide quality catering services for yachts.

> **TIP:** *If you are packing your own supplies, take a copious amount of water and soft drinks. Many people underestimate how much liquid they will need for a day at sea.*

Opposite: Sailing (© Jan McGready)

The Blue Cruise

Modern gulet

Back in the mid-20th century, Cevat Sakir Kabaagac wrote a book called *Mavi Yolculuk*, or Blue Cruise, about his adventures sailing around the coast with local sponge fishermen. He became known as the Fisherman of Halikarnas and inspired thousands of people to follow his route on a traditional wooden boat known as a gulet.

Few fishing boats are used as gulet cruisers now. Most are purpose built tourist boats with wide decks for sunbathing and dining. They often have small, luxurious cabins sleeping between eight and 12 people. They rely mainly on their motors and put up the sails only in the afternoon breeze to give those on board time to slumber in peace.

The first stop on the Blue Cruise route is the **Gulf of Gulluk**, north of Bodrum. The gulf has dozens of deserted bays, where forests descend to the rocky shore and the tinkling of goat bells from the herds grazing the wooded hillsides are the only sounds. Just a few kilometers inland is the ancient city of **Didyma**. At Lassos, sailors can anchor among the ruins.

Southeast is the more popular **Gulf of Gökova**. Gökova has more to offer sailors in search of nightlife with its tavernas and restaurants. The gulf is also famous for the remains of the ancient island city of **Keramos** and Cleopatra's Beach, said to have been imported from Egypt by Anthony for his lover to play upon. At the southwestern end of Gökova are the remains of the once great city of **Knidos**. It is a rugged difficult drive, but a beautiful sight from the water.

South of Knidos and the Datça Peninsula is the **Gulf of Hisaronu**, home to hundreds of coves and islands. Sail into **Marmaris**, a sailing town whose Netsel Marina is one of the largest and best equipped in the Turkey. From Marmaris to Antalya, the coast unfolds into the spectacular and the sublime. Iztuzu Beach, the last nesting ground for the Mediterranean loggerhead turtle, shelters the verdant **Dalyan** estuary and the ancient city of **Kaunos**.

From here, the Blue Cruise route makes its way into the Mediterranean resort of **Fethiye** and south to **Ölüdeniz**, the Dead Sea, with its pristine beaches. The bohemian resorts of **Kalkan** and **Kaş** are next on the itinerary, with the chance to see the sunken city of Kekova. Gulets pass by Çirali Beach next to the ancient ruins of **Olympos**. Last stop on the Blue Cruise is the city of **Antalya**, one of the country's largest and prettiest resorts.

BOOKING A GULET CRUISE

There are several ways to book a gulet cruise. If you want to loaf around on deck but do not have a huge budget, opt for one of the daily or overnight trips that run in the mornings from marinas in Bodrum, Marmaris and Göcek. Booking a trip in late May and early June will give you more power to barter down the price than in high season when the boats are busy. Also, try tour agents, who sell trips on a cabin basis, so you do not have to get your own group together.

If you gather a group of friends you can hire an entire gulet. You can either take a crew, which usually consists of a captain, cook and a couple of deckhands, or you can opt for a bareboat charter, which means taking control of the boat yourself or with your own capital and planning the itinerary.

The Turquoise Coast extends from Kusadasi in the north to Antalya, about 350 nautical miles to the south.

Tour Agents & Charter Companies

Tussock Cruising, UK ☎ 0208-5109292, www.tussockcruising.com, has traditional gulets that promise to hoist the sails rather than motoring. Single travelers can join a cruise with no surcharge. Tussock also has special interest cruises with themes such as photography, cooking, Turkish language and yoga.

Aegean Yacht Services, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 198, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3161517, www.egeyat.com.tr, has been providing yacht charters for 30 years and owns 25 boats. The gulets sleep a minimum of eight people, though just couples can hire them in the low season. All cabins have private bathroom. During July and August, there is a seven-day minimum; charters can be shorter off-season. An 18-m/60-foot yacht costs $615 a day, including crew; this rises to $3,900 for a 33-m/108-foot yacht. On-board catering is available for an additional charge. Day-trips cruising around the bays in Bodrum cost $30 per person, including lunch.

Akustik Travel, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 200, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3138964, www.travelbodrum.com, is a travel agent offering competitively priced yacht charters. A trip for two people, including a crew and lunch, starts at $325.

Marinas

Bodrum has several full-service marinas with a high standard of restaurants, shopping, showers and laundries. All marinas provide mooring, maintenance, repairs and dry-dock facilities.

Bodrum Milta Marina

Bodrum Milta Marina is in the town center, www.miltabodrumma rina.com. **D-Marin** is in Turgutreis, www.dogusmarina.com.tr. **Port Bodrum Marina** is in the quiet village of Yalikavak, www.portbodrum.com

SAILORS ON A BUDGET

You can pick up an inexpensive sailing trip at one of the stands in the main harbor in Bodrum. They cost about $20, depending on the number of passengers. Boats spend one or two hours sailing around Karada (Black Island).Contact **Bodrum Harbor Corporation**, ☎ 0532-5709601 (cell phone), www.bodrumgulets.port5.com.

Delphin (Kücükdeniz, Eski Foça, no phone) has a wooden gulet boat that sails every day from Foça Harbor to Siren Rocks, a formation of volcanic rocks similar to those in Cappadocia. The boat puts down its anchor several times for swimming and snorkeling and the trip lasts six hours.

There is no shortage of opportunity to sail out on the turquoise waters of the Aegean. Why not take the simple option and hire a local fisherman to show you around?

WINDSURFING & KITESURFING

On the southern end of Bodrum Peninsula, opposite the Greek island of Kos, is the windy enclave of **Fener**. The small resort, with its eponymous lighthouse, draws in windsurfers and kitesurfers in search of some exhilarating runs.

© Fener Windsurfing

Kitesurfing, a fusion of windsurfing, wakeboarding and kite flying, was dreamed up in Hawaii and is now the world's fastest water sport. You can learn to master both sports with **Fener Windsurfing** (☎ 0252-3938414, www.fenerwindsurf.com). Lessons for windsurfing novices can be booked in blocks of six or 10 hours. Price start at $165. The school also has classes for advanced windsurfers. These cost $45 per hour. Kitesurfing classes are more expensive. Discovery lessons cost $270 for a six-hour block. Fener Windsurfing has also started classes teaching dinghy sailing. Fener is 20 km/12 miles from downtown Bodrum and can be reached by *dolmus*.

RAFTING

Rafting is beginning to catch on and more clubs are opening, although they mainly cater to tourists. The place to head to in the Southern Aegean region is **Bekili Stream**, just outside Denizli. Here, a 9. 5 km/six-mile rafting course is open all. Rapids pass through Mangirinkisik Canyon and offers Class III and IV difficulty. They are not suitable for amateur rafters. The course takes about two hours to complete.

SEA KAYAKING

Sea kayaking is becoming a popular way of seeing ancient ruins submerged off the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts. As long as you can swim, kayaking is good fun. You just need to get the hang of paddling over the higher waves without coming out of the kayak.

© Ruzgar

Gökova-based **Ruzgar** (☎ 0532-2730915, www.gokovaruzgar.com) has daily kayaking trips around the Gulf of Gökova. One tour departs from Boncuk Bay and paddles its way around Sedir Island, Geilbolu Creek and takes in ancient Carias. Or you can kayak around Women's Creek and Akcapinar Creek. Tours start at $42, inclusive of equipment and instruction.

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

CITY WALKING TOUR

Downtown **Bodrum** is swarming from early spring until late summer with cars, mopeds and *dolmuses*. Do not waste your day stuck in a jam, get out and see the city on foot. **Turgutreis Tour Agency** (☎ 0252-3823054, www.ttatravel.net) has a walking tour of historical sites in the downtown area, including the Castle of St. Peter, the theater and the remains of the Mausoleum, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The three-hour tour costs $38.

TREKKING

Treks around **Bodrum Peninsula** roam through pine-covered peaks littered with the cisterns and castles of forgotten cities. Many of these cities belonged to the Lelegians, the oldest-known inhabitants of the region.

Ruins from ancient Side, which was abandoned when Mausolus moved his capital to Halicarnassos, can be found on a trek around **Karadağ** (Black Mountain). The route begins at Yukari Gölköy, a village south of Gundogan. From here, it is a good climb up Karadağ, where Oren and Girel castles are hidden to the west and south of the summit. A pathway leads down from Oren Kale to the village of Dagbelen, a picturesque hamlet of whitewashed houses and olive groves. The route is suited to intermediate level trekkers.

Dilek Milli National Park has a trekking path that runs from the village of Eski Doğanbey, where the visitor center is based, to Oluklu Kanyon 15 km/nine miles away. Guides are available at the visitor center (☎ 0256-6461079, www.dilekyarimadasi.com). The park has more than 800 species of wildflowers and botanical guides can be hired from the center. The park is open 8am-7pm in summer and closes at 5pm in winter. There is an entrance fee.

The **Besparmak Mountains** surrounding Lake Bafa are full of trekking routes. They are not marked, so it is advisable to go with a guide. Many of the pensions in Kapikiri, the village in the foothills of the mountain, offer guiding. I would recommend hiring Mithat Sercin from Agora Pension. He is extremely knowledgeable about the area and its wildlife, and is good company.

The Besparmak Route. Just five km/three miles from the village of Kapikiri is the turnoff to Golkaya, the departure point for treks into the mountains. The route follows mule tracks and remnants of ancient city walls running through a hillside rampant with wild orchids, forget-me-knots and lavenders. It is impossible not to encounter cows, goats and donkeys chomping on the vegetation. After about an hour of walking you will have to climb over a mound of rocks. This is an arduous climb but worth it for the Neolithic cave here that features amazing paintings of a shaman and sheep- or goat-like characters meant to symbolize women. The plateau near the caves is a great place to stop for a picnic with the breathtaking panorama of the lake below. Farther on, lie the enigmatic arches of the Byzantine Stylos Monastery raised on a mound. Below the monastery are oddly shaped giant boulders beaten by the weather and monks. Look for the rock that has one side carved out and an overhanging top. It was used as a monk's cell and has vivid frescoes of scenes from the Bible. It is almost impossible to find the Neolithic cave and the frescoes on the rock without a guide. The route continues up the Royal Road to the Monastery of Seven Brothers.

This trek can be done in eight to 10 hours of hard walking, or it can be spread over two days. Alternately, you can spend about four hours trekking to the Neolithic caves and Stylos Monastery. The route is intermediate level with some difficult climbing.

Longer treks of between two and five days can be arranged through **Agora Pension**. These explore the remote villages in the 1,375-m/4,500-foot Besparmak Mountains and require higher endurance. Donkeys are used to carry equipment. In summer, you can camp out on the iron beds used by shepherds.

ADVENTURES ON HORSEBACK

There is something amazing about learning to control a powerful horse, especially when you can trek through meadows or along a beach. However, unless you are a natural with horses, you should not consider joining a horse safari without first being trained in a ring.

© Turgutreis Country Ranch

Turgutreis Country Ranch in Bodrum (☎ 0252-3825654, www.irismaritime.com) has riding lessons on French, Belgian and German full-blood horses at its ranch on an unspoilt stretch of the peninsula. There are also safaris on Halflinger and Arab-mix horses to the surrounding beaches and into the hills. The ranch is open year-round, although during the summer months, lessons and safaris are restricted to early mornings and evenings. Advanced bookings are recommended. Lessons and safaris cost $20 per hour.

Gökova's **Forest Park Horse Club** trains beginners in manege. Once riders have proved they are competent, they can join a one-hour safari through the forest. The ranch has Arabian, English full-blood and West Fallen horses. Lessons cost $20 per hour and safaris start at $32.

ECO-ADVENTURES

BIRDING

Thousands of years of development and deforestation by the Greeks, Romans and Ottomans have created wetlands and marshes that offer some of Europe's best birding opportunities.

Dilek Milli National Park attracts about 250 species of birds, including egrets, lesser kestrels and white-tailed eagles. Endangered species such as the pygmy cormorant and dalmatian pelican also breed in the area. Guided tours can be arranged through the park's visitor center (☎ 0256-614100).

The estuary at **Pamucak Beach** is an interesting spot for birders. Flamingos can be seen in March and April. Throughout spring and summer, storks raise their young on every chimneystack and aqueduct arch in **Selçuk**.

Limosa Holidays (UK ☎ 01263-578143, www.limosaholidays.com) has packages that combine birding with ancient ruins. The nine-day tour begins at Ephesus, where blue rock thrushes and Western rock nuthatches can be spotted among the marble columns and pillars. In the surrounding meadows and rocks, booted eagles and long-legged buzzards hunt for food. The tour also includes trips to Lake Bafa and Miletos to see glossy ibis, spur-winged plovers and ruddy shelducks. Afterwards, the tour heads south to Dalyan, where you can take boat trips on the delta to watch the kingfishers, purple herons and white-winged black terns. The tour costs $2,750, including return flights from London, accommodation, entry to archaeological sites and transfers.

Glossy ibis

CULTURAL ADVENTURES

FESTIVALS

Bodrum International Ballet Festival enjoyed its fourth year in 2007. Shows, held in August in St. Peter's Castle, bring together dancers from across the world, including the renowned Kirov Ballet and the best ballet companies in Turkey. Tickets can be purchased from the castle box office (☎ 0252-3162516).

D-Marin Turgutreis International Classical Music Festival is a collection of Turkish state orchestras and singers for a four-day gala in Bodrum's yacht marina. Tickets are sold at the marina (☎ 0252-3829200, www.dogusmarina.com.tr).

CAMEL WRESTLING

The one-day **Camel Wrestling Festival** takes place in the third week of January in Selçuk. The sport of camel wrestling was started by nomadic tribes, who depended on camels for their livelihood. These days, it is more of comedy event than a blood sport. The wrestling involves the typical pushing or butting male camels do to seek precedence over a rival in the mating stakes. The festival is hosted by a referee, who commentates and whoops up the crowd.

MUSIC, ART & DANCE

Antik Tiyatro, the beautiful amphitheater that overlooks Bodrum's harbor and the Castle of St. Peter, hosts classical and pop music concerts in the summer. Tickets are available from Biletix, www.biletix.com.

Eklisia Cultural Center, Gümüslük, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3943649. This beautiful old church holds art exhibitions, performances and concerts. It also acts as a workshop and cinema theater.

The **Epsilon Gallery**, Keles Cikmazi 5, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3132964, is housed within the Epsilon Restaurant and attracts temporary exhibitions from renowned Turkish artists.

PHOTOGRAPHY TOURS

Jan McGready (☎ 0256-6181499, www.janmcgready.com) was born in England and traveled extensively before settling in Turkey. She works as a professional photographer specializing in holiday brochures and has started weekly workshops to pass on her knowledge to other keen photographers. Course participants stay in an old Greek house where they learn about the tricks of capturing great photographs before venturing out to practice on the beautiful South Aegean landscape. The one-week course costs $1,575.

ADVENTURES FOR THE BODY & SOUL

Karakaya Meditation Camp, Eski Karakaya, Gümüslük, ☎ 0212-2457510 (Istanbul phone number), www.oshokun.com. Whether you are looking to lose yourself or find yourself, Karakaya programs could achieve both. The summer retreat in the hills above Bodrum has workshops and classes ranging from meditation to Shamanic Journeying, Sufism, relationship healing and a life and death workshop. There are also creative classes, such as stone carving and painting, albeit with a few twists. Courses range from $13 to $615. Places for workshops are limited. Accommodation is provided in tents and huts.

TURKISH BATHS

Most four- and five-star hotels in the Southern Aegean have a *hamam*, or Turkish bath. Some of them feature separate sections for men and women, while others are more touristic with communal bathing. Try the public *hamam* for a more authentic experience.

Bodrum Hamami, Cevat Sakir Caddesi, Fabrika Sokak 42, ☎ 0252-3134129. Open daily 6am-midnight. This *hamam* has separate sections for men and women.

Selçuk Hamam, ☎ 0232-8926198. The *hamam* is just east of the train station. It's open daily 7am-midnight for mixed bathing; Friday noon-6pm for women-only bathing.

SHOPPING

BODRUM

Bodrum is renowned for great shopping. The town district buzzes with bargain-hunters from morning until midnight. All sorts of shops can be found between the restaurants and bars on **Kale Caddesi** and **Cumhuriyet Caddesi**. Shops on the outskirts of the old town sell antiques and handicrafts. Bodrum's main specialties are leather, gold and silver jewelry and pottery.

There is a **textile market** every Tuesday and a **food market** every Thursday and Friday, with farmers coming to sell a range of organic vegetables and homemade goods.

Bodrum **Mazi Koylu village market** is held in two locations: Asagi Mazi and Yukari Mazi in the Mumcular area. The villages are about 55 km/35 miles from downtown Bodrum, and *dolmuses* depart from the city center every two hours. Traders from across the region come together to sell fruit and vegetables, handmade tablecloths, textiles and clothes.

Oasis Shopping, Culture & Entertainment Center, Kibris Sehitleri Caddesi, ☎ 0252-3170002, is on the northwest side of Bodrum by the Gümbet crossroads. It was the city's first shopping plaza. It is mainly popular with tourists who like being able to shop at leisure away from the crowded center. There are restaurants and a movie theater. Oasis provides a free shuttle bus from downtown.

Milta Bodrum Marina, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi, ☎ 0252-3161860, is a swanky shopping complex within walking distance of the downtown area. The mall stocks international labels, including Levi's, Tommy Hilfiger and Vakko. It also has a small Gima supermarket.

FOOD SHOPPING

Sutte, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 196, ☎ 0252-3166061. This deli sells homemade appetizers and every kind of cheese and meat needed to make a picnic or for a day of yachting.

Safran Natural Foods, Yeni Çarşi, 1 Sokak 15, ☎ 0252-3162746, has all the olives and flavored olive oils you could ever need. Plus olive oil soaps and other natural products.

Yunuslar Karadeniz Firini, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 13, ☎ 0252-3161748, is a wonderful bakery and pastry store that's open 24 hours.

PURCHASING ANTIQUES

Be careful when shopping for antiques. Turkish laws prohibit the export of antiquities with historical or cultural value, and smuggling carries a heavy prison sentence. If you find an antique you cannot live without, check with the authorities or a museum curator and obtain a certificate stating that the item can be exported legally. Old carpets and kilims should also have a certificate. This can usually be taken care of by the dealer. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to ensure your purchase is legal.

HANDICRAFTS & JEWELRY

Dalyanci, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 8A, ☎ 0252-3130214. There is an array of colorful and original ceramics and glassware at this store. All items are designed by Engin Dalyanci and inspired by the sea and nature.

Gazelle, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 124, specializes in unusual gifts. There is an eclectic mix of quality handicrafts, jewelry and ethnic clothes.

Hizma, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 47A, ☎ 0252-3166716. Decorative art, gifts, Indian jewelry and pottery.

Karapinar Tuhafiye, Atatürk Caddesi 22A, Yalikavak, ☎ 0252-3854189, has tablecloths, towels and bed linen made locally using traditional Buldan material.

Pozitif Atolye, Kanlidere Caddesi 6, ☎ 0252-3133484 sells unique and unusual jewelry.

CLOTHING BOUTIQUES

Abbate-Sarar, Oasis Shopping, Cultural and Entertainment Center, ☎ 0252-3170154, has high quality men's clothing.

Ali Guven, Çarşi Ici, ☎ 0252-3132216, is a wonderful and internationally acclaimed shoemaker. This is the place to visit if you have ever wanted to have a pair of leather shoes custom made.

Gant USA, in the Milta Bodrum Marina, ☎ 0252-3139152, offers casual clothes and sportswear from the American staple.

Hermès, Kale Caddesi 46, ☎ 0252-3163652, on the edge of the bazaar area, has a large selection of leather, from classic styles to the latest fashions and colors for men and women.

Home Store, Milta Bodrum Marina, ☎ 0252-3136470, sells trendy women's clothing, swimwear, accessories and shoes.

There's a **Levi's** store in the Oasis Shopping, Cultural & Entertainment Center, ☎ 0252-3171199.

Marks & Spencer, an English department store, is at Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 204, ☎ 0252-3137640. It sells swimwear and everyday clothes for men, women and children.

Polo Garage, Oasis Shopping, Cultural & Entertainment Center, ☎ 0252-3170069, sells dresses, shirts and casualwear.

BOOKSTORES

D&R, Milta Bodrum Marina, ☎ 0252-3137362, has a comprehensive choice of English- and Turkish-language novels, factual books, maps and CDs.

Imge Kitabevi, Oasis Shopping, Cultural & Entertainment Center, ☎ 0252-3170193, sells factual books and novels, CDs and DVDs.

KUSADASI

If you are overwhelmed by archaeological ruins, then Kuşadasi is a great antidote. The pedestrian roads around **Barbaros Hayrettin Caddesi** form the main shopping area. The stores are upmarket and bargaining is a must. Expect the shops to be mobbed when the cruise liners are docked in the harbor and for the shop owners to aggressively tout for business when they are not.

HANDICRAFTS & JEWELRY

Hermès, Barbaros Hayrettin, Paşa Bulvari 28/4, ☎ 0256-6149490. The lavish interior of this store is almost as striking as the jewelry it sells.

Massif Jewelry, Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa Bulvari, Kayayurt Pasaji 26/C, ☎ 0256-6145483, sells fine jewelry, watches and gifts.

Meerschaum King, Dağ Mahallesi, Yali Caddesi Orient Bazaar 7/B, ☎ 0256-6121247. This is a fun place to shop for inexpensive souvenirs.

NIGHTLIFE

MOVIE THEATERS

Cinemarin, Oasis Shopping Center, Kibris Sehitleri Caddesi, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3170001, shows English-language films, as does **Karia Cinema**, Mindos Caddesi 15, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3166272.

BARS & NIGHTCLUBS

BODRUM

Bodrum's decadent nightlife screams party. For the trendy set, the evening begins with an après-beach cocktail at a beach club before moving on to one of the more salubrious bars or restaurants. Others prefer to converge in **Cumhuriyet Caddesi**, known as Bar Street, before heading to behemoth discos to dance until the sun comes up again.

Amigos Tapas Bar, Osman Nuri Bilgin Caddesi 95, Gümbet, ☎ 0252-3138665, is a Mexican-themed bar that serves, among other things, tequila and delicious fajitas.

Campanella Bar, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 53, ☎ 0252-3165302, is a cute traditionally Turkish bar. Open 1am-4am.

Dar Kapi, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 122, ☎ 0252-3131608, is a favorite bar for all those in the know.

Fly-Inn Dodo Beach in Yalikavak is a swanky beach club by day that morphs into a mammoth all-night dance club. During the day, you can play on the beach and enjoy watersports while listening to Samba and African music. In the evening, the thumping pop tunes are never ending. Meanwhile, there are restaurants and five-star hotel facilities. You just have to remember to go home – eventually. Open summertime.

Mavi Bar, Mavi Suite Hotel, Göltürkbükü, ☎ 0252-3776360, is a lively Latin music bar with dance teachers on hand for those seeking their own *Dirty Dancing* moment. Live bands and DJs. Open 7pm-3am.

Halikarnas Disco, ☎ 0252-3168000, is the biggest outdoor disco in the Mediterranean. At least, that is the claim it makes. Located at the far end of Bar Street, the club has pretensions to resemble the antique city, but this is slightly ruined by the foam parties and hoards of rowdy revelers. There is a cover charge that includes one free drink. Open 10pm-4am.

Katarmaran Disco, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, ☎ 0252-3133600. This floating disco is one of Bodrum's party institutions. It has a capacity for 2,500 people and departs from the pier on Cumhuriyet Caddesi at 1am before sailing out to sea. It returns at 4am. The price at weekends is about $30.

Kuba Bar, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 62, ☎ 0252-3134450, www.kubabar.com, is an immensely popular and lively bar that is now in its second decade. It is set in the courtyard of a stone house with interesting artwork on show. The emphasis is on being seen. Typical seafood and international dishes are available in the restaurant. Open 7pm-3am.

Marina Yacht Club, Milta Bodrum Marina, ☎ 0252-3161228. A sophisticated, older crowd can be found at the yacht club at the far end of the marina. There is a terrace bar outside, or you can pull up a stool at the curved bar next to the restaurant. The dining room serves Italian and Turkish cuisine. The cocktails are expensive, but definitely worth their Lira. Latin music is played in the evening. Open 8am-late.

Q Beach, Yali Mevkii, Göltürkbükü, ☎ 0252-3776363, is one of the best clubs in Istanbul and has now opened a sister nightclub in Bodrum. The bar is open during the day as a beach club with a steak and tapas restaurant. Live jazz music in the evenings. Open 10am-4am.

Sanat Cafe & Gallery, Yalikavak, ☎ 0536-8847491 (cell phone). The Art Deco-style building stands out on the edge of this quaint village. The café doubles as an art gallery, with paintings and sculptures on display. Breakfast is available, but reservations are essential. Otherwise, the bar serves a selection of non-alcoholic drinks, wine and beer. Open 9am-10pm.

Temple Disco, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, ☎ 0252-3165815, is trendy and chic, and incredibly crowded.

DIDIM

Didim's nightlife is not the most exciting in the Aegean. It mainly consists of noisy discos and bars, some with Turkish theme nights.

Medusa Disco, Yali Caddesi, Altinkum, ☎ 0256-8137519, is a rowdy spot in the center of the popular British tourist resort.

KUSADASI

The alleyways in Kuşadasi's old town, between Barbaros Hayrettin Bulvari and Sağlik Sokak, are known collectively as **Barlar Sokak**, Bar Street. Here you can find a string of British and Irish pubs and discos full of package holidaymakers determined to let it all hang out. It is not particularly cultured, but it is worth spending one night of your life here. The best places to go in Bar Street are **Jimmy's Bar**, just by the entrance, **Paddy's Irish Bar**, **Killarny Irish Bar** and **Dirty Nellies**.

Ecstasy Bar, Sakarya Sokak 22, ☎ 0256-6131391. The two-floor Ecstasy Bar is one of the most popular nightclubs in town. It attracts a young crowd who come for the thumping music in its open-air disco.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL PRICES	
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Costs given here are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

BODRUM

Agan Pension, Atatürk Caddesi 61, ☎ 0252-3162164, is an excellent standard for a budget pension. The rooms have stripped wooden floors and comfortable beds. There is a bar and outside terrace. A 10-minute walk from the beach. $

AUTHOR PICK: Antique Theatre Hotel, Kibris Sehitleri Caddesi 243, ☎ 0252-3166053, antiquetheatrehotel.com. This luxurious hotel is built over a series of terraces on the hillside opposite the ancient theater of Halicarnassus. The French restaurant has won critical acclaim in *The New York Times*. All 19 bedrooms and the swimming pool have private terraces overlooking the Castle of St. Peter and the marina. You could splash out and book the two-bedroom suite at the top of the hotel – it's the coolest place to stay in Bodrum. $$$

Ayaz Hotel, Ayaz Caddesi 12, Gümbet, ☎ 0252-3161174, www.ayazhotel.com. The 96-room whitewashed cube hotel sits on the beach surrounded by a botanical garden. It offers a whole host of activities, including watersports, scuba diving and a climbing wall. The hotel also has mini golf, a children's pool, live shows and a playground, making it great for families. $$

© Ayaz Hotel

Bagarasi Villa, Yalikavak, UK ☎ 07946-569369, www.luxurylet.com, is a luxury four-bedroom, four-bathroom property with a private pool and three terraces overlooking the surrounding countryside and hills. The villa, which has a lounge with satellite TV and fully-equipped kitchen, sleeps up to eight people. $$$

Bitez Antik Hotel, Bergamut Caddesi 54, Yali Mevkii, Bitez, ☎ 0252-3638802, www.bitezantik.com. This apartment-style hotel opened in

2005 close to the beach in Bitez. The 60 rooms have en-suite bathrooms and air conditioning. The complex has a large outdoor swimming pool as well as a children's pool. $$

© Bitez Antik Hotel

Bodrum Backpackers, Atatürk Caddesi 31, ☎ 0252-3132762, www.bodrumbackpackers.com, is a hostel that looks more like a hotel. It has dorms and private rooms with bathrooms. There are two bars and a restaurant, plus a sports café showing sports from Australia, the US and Europe. $

AUTHOR PICK: The Butterfly Boutique Hotel, Unlu Sokak, 1512 Sokak 66, ☎ 0252-3138358, www.thebutterflybodrum.com, is an elegant new hotel that is truly bespoke with just six rooms, all individually themed. The most luxurious is the Medalyon Room, which features carved woodwork, great views and a Jacuzzi bath. The hotel was once a luxury villa and it retains that atmosphere. All rooms have a private balcony, terrace or garden and some have views over the Aegean Sea. $$$

© Butterfly Boutique Hotel

Ece Resort, Hurriyet Caddesi 64, Göltürkbükü, ☎ 0252-3577388, www.eceresort.com, is lost among mandarin orchards and gardens, 17 km/11 miles from Bodrum town center. The hotel has a bohemian twist with its hand-painted murals and antique bedcovers. Swimming pool. Yoga classes are available. $$

© Ece Resort

© Hotel Kalender

Hotel Kalender, Eskicesme Mahallesi, Bitez Sokak 1, Gümbet, ☎ 0252-3164685, www.hotelkalender.com, is a good two-star option, with a whitewashed exterior and a swimming pool. It is popular with families and backpackers alike and is walking distance from the beach. The rooms are basic, but they are clean and comfortable enough for anyone who wants to spend most of their day out exploring. Rooms have air conditioning and TVs. $

Karakaya Meditation Center, Karakaya, Gümüslük, ☎ 0212-245-7510, www.oshokun.com. If you are searching for something totally different, come to Karakaya, where you can stay in a Tibetan or Mongolian tent or even a stone hut. The camp runs a series of workshops, including Sufism, meditation and life coaching. $

L'Ambiance Resort Bodrum, Büyük Iskender Yolu Myndos Kapisi, ☎ 0252-3138330, www.lambiance.com, is set close to the Myndos Gate, which Alexander the Great passed through. Its swimming pool boasts a backdrop of 1,600-year-old ruins. Meanwhile, the resort's 139 rooms and 10 suites have modern facilities with mini-bars and satellite TVs. There is a sauna, fitness suite and outdoor swimming pool. $$

© L"Ambiance Resort

Maca Kizi Hotel, Kesireburnu Mevkii, Göltürkbükü, ☎ 0252-3776272, www.macakizi.com. The owner of Maca Kizi made her foray into the hotel business in 1977 when she first discovered Bodrum, then just a secluded bay. After several moves around the peninsula, Maca Kizi opened in its current location in 2000. Expect elegance and excellent service at a price. $$$$

The Marmara Bodrum, Yokusbasi Mahallesi, Sulu Hasan Caddesi 19, ☎ 0252-3138130, www.themarmarahotels.com. The 100-room Marmara Bodrum was inspired by the town's medieval castle and decorated by a French designer. Rooms have chunky wooden furniture and natural fabrics with quirky touches. There is a gym, spa and Jacuzzi with spectacular views over the castle and marina. $$$$

Pool and terrace

© The Marmara Hotels

DIDIM

AUTHOR PICK: Medusa House Pansiyon, Apollon Temple Yani, ☎ 0256-8110063, www.medusahouse.com, kirasus@aol.com, is a stone house set in a flower-filled garden with plenty of hideaways where you can sit and read a book overlooking the Temple of Apollo. There is even a hammock in the garden to laze on after visiting the ruins. $$

KUSADASI

Club Caravansarail Hotel & Restaurant, Okuz Mehmet Paşa Karavansarayi, ☎ 0256-6144115, www.kusadasihotels.com/caravansarail, caravansarail@kusadasi.net. The 26-room Okuz Mehmet Pasa Karavansarai was built for the Grand Vizier in 1618 and still carries traces of its Selçuk and Ottoman past. You could live the life of a Silk Road tradesman for a night or two. $$

Kismet, Gazi Begendi Bulvari 1, ☎ 0256-6181290, www.kismet.com.tr, is set in formal gardens on a private peninsula overlooking Bird Island. It provides the luxury and style of a bygone era and is a truly wonderful place to stay. The list of previous guests reads like a roll call of kings, queens and presidents: Queen Elizabeth II and Jimmy Carter among them. There are 107 rooms, 12 deluxe rooms and three suites. There is a private stone beach. $$$

PAMUKKALE

Melrose Allgau Hotel, ☎ 0258-2722767, info@allgauhote.com, is a family-run guesthouse. Rooms have en-suite bathrooms and there's a swimming pool and garden. $

© Melrose Allgau Hotel

LAKE BAFA

AUTHOR PICK: Agora Pansiyon, Kapikiri village center, ☎ 0252-5435445, www.herakleia.com, has seven double rooms and three chalet bungalows in its spacious garden. There is a terrace where you can enjoy king-sized home-cooked meals while men romp through the streets below on donkeys. The owners, Orhan and his two sons, are great hosts. $$

© Agora Pansiyon

Club Natura Olivia, Kocaorman Mahallesi 10, Pinarcik Koyu, ☎ 0252-5191072, www.clubnatura.com. Located on the edge of Lake Bafa, this eco-lodge has 30 rooms in nine stone houses. The area surrounding the hotel has some great hiking trails and there is a small beach. The restaurant caters to vegetarians and the health-conscious. Meditation course are available. $$

SELÇUK

Artemis, Atatürk Mahallesi, 1016 Sokak 19, ☎ 0232-8921982, www.artemisguesthouse.com. Artemis has clean, spacious rooms with private bathrooms and a swimming pool. Its real benefit is the depth of the owners' knowledge about the area and the free transport to Ephesus. Other day-trips can be arranged. $

Dreams Guest House, Atatürk Mahallesi, Sahabettin Dede Caddesi 5, ☎ 0232-8922278, www.dreamsguest house.com. This bright pink hotel is located in the center of Selçuk, 100 m/330 feet from the bus station and next to the fruit market. It has a laundry, free Internet access, BBQ area and air conditioning. $

AUTHOR PICK: **Nilya Hotel**, Atatürk Mahallesi 1051 Sokak 7, ☎ 0232-8929081, www.nilya.com. A haven of eccentricity, Nilya is brimming with the owners' curiosities, like an antique gramophone and a cuckoo clock. It is located on a twisting lane near to the castle and is wonderfully impossible to find. There is a secluded garden and an upstairs terrace where you can watch the sun set over the surrounding hills. Kara, the owner's loveable old dog, will be sure to keep you company. $$

© Nilya Hotel

WHERE TO EAT

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

NOTE: *Along the coast, not all restaurants are open outside the busy summer season. I have noted those that stay open all year.*

BODRUM

Berk Restaurant, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 167, ☎ 0252-3130239, is a mainstay of the Bodrum restaurant scene. It serves fish from its waterfront location. $$

BODRUM BODRUM
© Bodrum Bodrum

Bodrum Bodrum Restaurant, Atatürk Caddesi, Uslu Sokak 8, ☎ 0252-3166545, www.bodrumbodrum.com. This cozy new restaurant set is in a traditional stone house. It offers Turkish *mezes*, seafood and Mediterranean dishes. $$

Café Barumba, Zengin Huseyin Sokak 13A, Gümbet, ☎ 0252-3162439. Run by a trio of Turks – one of whom lived in New York and the other two moved back to Turkey from Australia – Barumba has the best New York-style pizza, calzones and stromboli, as well as pasta. Wine and beer are also available. $$

Café Penguen, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 174, ☎ 0252-3166409. This 24-hour café/bar overlooks the castle and beach. It serves Italian cuisine and cakes. $$

Kocadon, Saray Sokak 1, ☎ 0252-3163705, is a romantic restaurant in the cobblestoned courtyard of an old farmhouse with a fountain and well. Banana palms and mulberry trees hang over the tables. $$

La Jolla Bistro, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 174, ☎ 0252-3137660, www.lajollabodrum.com. Popular and crowded, La Jolla dishes up its fusion of Californian and Mediterranean *tapas* and main courses at this year-round location. The sister restaurant at Xuma Beach is open during summertime only. A sushi menu is available with reservations. $$$

Liman Koftecisi, Neyzen Tevfik 172, ☎ 0252-3165060, is a relaxed restaurant serving *kofte* (Turkish meatballs) and chicken dishes. $$

Marina China Hong Kong Restaurant, Neyzen Tevfik 204, ☎ 0252-3168537, www.bodrumchinese.com, offers a quality Chinese meal in the marina. It is part of a small chain. The chef is authentic and does a tour of the dining room to prove it. There is free taxi service, children's menu and take-out service. $$$

Mehtap Restaurant, Akyarlar, ☎ 0252-3936148, has been operating this waterfront restaurant for 19 years. It has a wide selection of appetizers and seafood. Open all year. $$

Musti's Steakhouse, Plaj Caddesi 28, ☎ 0252-3855230, is known for its huge portions of succulent fillet steak. Leave room for the homemade cheesecake. $$

Palmiye Pastry Shop & Pizzeria, Belediye Meydani 3, ☎ 0252-3169188. Simply gorgeous pastries and pizzas. Open all year. $

Secret Garden, Danaci Sokak 20, ☎ 0252-3131641, is a wonderfully romantic restaurant with elegant rattan tables and chairs and soft music. There is a cozy inside dining room with an open fire in autumn. The Mediterranean menu includes confît of duck and rabbit in a cream and white wine sauce. $$

Sunger Pizza, Neyzen Tevfik Caddesi 216, ☎ 0252-3160854, is a large restaurant specializing in pizza, but meat and chicken are on the menu too. Delivery service is available. $$

Yalcin Usta's Baklava, Hurriyet Caddesi 104, Gölköy, ☎ 0252-3777257, has wonderful homemade baklava (honey-soaked pastry with pistachio nuts) and *sigara borek* (salty pastry prepared with cheese or meat). $

Zeyno's Cookies, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 177/8, ☎ 0252-3133096. Sugar is the best cure for a hangover, so indulge in the homemade cookies and pastries at Zeyno's after a night out. The café is located near Halikarnas Night Club. Breakfast is also served. $

DIDIM

Didim Şehir Lokantasi, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, ☎ 0256-8114488. Hearty traditional meat and vegetable stews and spicy kebabs are served in this canteen in downtown Didim. $

KUSADASI

Capriola, Turkmen Mahallesi 50, Yil Caddesi 51, ☎ 0256-6123572, offers good Italian steaks and pasta. Strangely. It also has a selection of Mexican dishes. $$

Oscar White Restaurant, Ladies Beach, 9 Sokak 57, ☎ 0532-5897571. This unpretentious beach bar sells omelettes, pizza, salads and snacks. It also serves alcoholic drinks. $$

Port Fly Café Bar & Restaurant, Güvercin Ada Caddesi, Ege Port Alisveris Merkezi B-105, ☎ 0256-6147050, alperrozay@mynet.com. Enjoy dinner and a glass of wine on the side of the port overlooking

Bird Island. The contemporary bar is a magnet for Kuşadasi's trendy set. $$$

Saray Restaurant, Bozkurt Sokak 25, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0256-6120528, www.sarayrestaurant.com. Saray is a large, galleried restaurant in the old town. Its owner has traveled extensively and has tried to bring this experience to the restaurant. The menu includes Turkish, Indian, Mexican and Dutch dishes. $$

Saray Restaurant

© Saray Restaurant

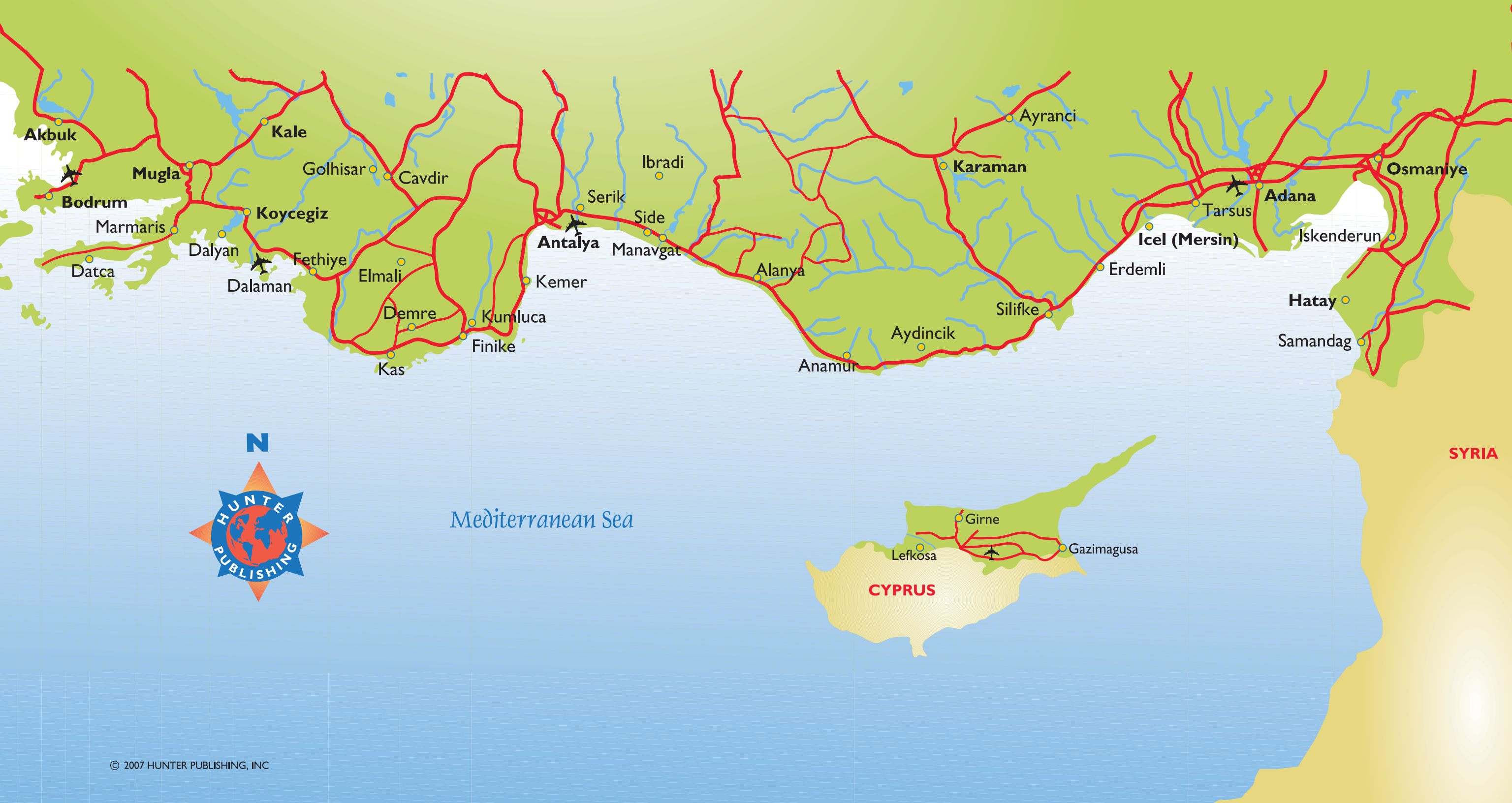
Seyhan Restaurant, Sağlik Caddesi 63, ☎ 0256-6147985, is a lively tourist restaurant with a broad international menu listing everything from Chinese to Italian. The bartender is a champion cocktail shaker. $$

SELÇUK

Café Le Wagon, Tren Muzesi, Camlik near Selçuk, ☎ 0232-8948118, atilla.misirlioglu@mynet.com. This friendly restaurant is set in the grounds of a train museum, which gives it a quirky edge. It serves Turkish and Mediterranean food from a set menu, though you can call ahead and they will try to prepare whatever you would like to eat. Le Wagon has a good reputation among locals. $$$

Selçuk Koftecisi, Vergi Dairesi Alti 37/J, ☎ 0232-8926696. A simple diner serving good kebabs and meatballs. $

Mediterranean Coast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The Mediterranean Coast

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Anatolia's south coast falls into four ancient geographical regions. Stunning **Lycia** is achingly beautiful with its backdrop of cliffs jutting out over sea caves and sandy coves. The mountains are swamped by forests of pine, larch, cedar and juniper, with lavender, poppies and orchids growing across the plateaus in spring. Lycia encompasses the wild beach at Olympos, the upmarket former Greek towns of Kalkan and Kaş, and the bustling yacht resort of Kemer.

Farther east, the mountains recede and the area between Antalya and Manavgat has an extensive plain. The area, known as **Pamphylia**, meant "the land of all tribes." It is well irrigated by rivers and streams and is known for its cotton production. In Greek and Roman times it supported five large cities: Attaleia, Perge, Sillyum, Aspendos and Side.

At the far eastern end is the fertile coast of **Adana**, **Tarsus** and **Mersin**, which have also become rich on their cotton harvests. To the west, the Taurus Mountains rise from the coastline and reach as high as 3,000 m/10,000 feet. Their slopes are cut up by river valleys that plunge down into tremendous gorges. Known in ancient times as Cilicia, it was a hotly contested region whose legacy can be seen in the myriad of medieval castles.

To the south is **Hatay**, an area that has spent more time under the rule of Armenia and Syria than Ottoman Turkey. The principal towns, Iskenderun and Antakya, have managed to retain a distinctly Turkish atmosphere in the style of houses, clothes and reception given to travelers.

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY AIR

Situated 5.5 km/3.5 miles south of Dalaman, **Dalaman International Airport** (DLM, ☎ 0252-7925291) is packed with charter and scheduled flights from Europe during the summer season. A new terminal building has opened with better facilities, including a shopping center and restaurants. **Turkish Airlines** (☎ 0252-7925395, www.thy.com) has direct flights from Istanbul to Dalaman, though no direct flights from other Turkish cities (they are all routed through Istanbul). Dalaman is the western point along the Mediterranean for air traffic.

Antalya International Airport (AYT, ☎ 0242-3303600, www.aytport.com) is the central point along the Mediterranean for air traffic. The international terminal is extremely busy in summer with flights from Germany and the UK. Daily flights operate from Antalya to Ankara and Istanbul. The airport is modern with decent restaurants, cafés and bars, as well as a post office, ATMs, travel agencies and car hire companies.

Adana-Sakirpasa Airport (ADA, ☎ 0322-4359186, www.dhmi.gov.tr) is four km/2.5 miles from downtown Adana. It has daily flights to Istanbul and Ankara.

TRAVEL TO MEDITERRANEAN TOWNS

For most travelers, Dalaman is a transport hub with its international airport and good bus network. **Havaş buses** (☎ 0232-2742276, www.havas.com.tr) run in conjunction with the timetables of Turkish domestic carriers. From Marmaris, buses leave the Turkish Airlines office in the city center 2½ hours before each flight time. The trip takes 90 minutes and stops at Dalaman, Ortaca (for Dalyan) and Gökova. You can also ask the driver to stop at other points along the route. Tickets cost $14, one way.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The Mediterranean Coast

GETTING TO DOWNTOWN ANTALYA

Antalya International Airport is 10 km/six miles outside the city center. **Havaş** shuttle buses (☎ 0242-3303800, www.havas.com.tr) run from the airport to the Turkish Airlines office on Konyaalti Sokak. They also stop in the city center and at the main bus station (*otogar*). Tickets cost $6, one way.

Otherwise, take a yellow taxi. The fare into the city center will cost about $20.

GETTING TO DOWNTOWN ADANA

Taxis are the best bet for the short trip from the airport into the city center. The fare runs about $25.

MAJOR ROADS

The **D-400** runs along the Mediterranean Coast between Dalaman and Adana, connecting Antalya, Side, Alanya, Anamur and Mersin. A new toll road, called the **Göcek Tunnel**, links Dalaman airport with southwestern Turkey. The tunnel bypasses the mountain road and cuts the traveling time.

The **E-87** runs from Edirne down the Aegean Coast and into Antalya. The **E-90** is the spine of the country between Ankara and Adana, a distance of 470 km/290 miles. Antakya is reached via the **E-91** highway.

BY SEA

Ferries operated by the **Bodrum Ferryboat Association** (☎ 0252-3160882, www.bodrumferryboat.com) make the two-hour crossing from Bodrum to Korman, on the Datça Peninsula, twice daily during the summer at 9am and 5pm. In winter, the service runs twice weekly. The ferry is a speedy way of making the trip down to Datça. Shuttle buses travel the 6.5 km/four miles to Datça from Korman. A single crossing on the ferry costs $9; a return ticket is $16; cars cost another $28.

Bodrum Express Lines (www.bodrumexpresslines.com) operates a hydrofoil service between Bodrum and Marmaris. You actually sail to the harbor town of Gelibolu in the Gulf of Gökova and travel for 20 minutes by bus to Marmaris. The hydrofoil departs twice a day from Bodrum at 8am and 6pm every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. The journey takes an hour and 15 minutes. One-way tickets cost $32. There is a huge discount for buying a return ticket.

Passenger ferries run daily from Marmaris to the Greek island of Rhodes. They depart at 9am and 4pm and take 50 minutes. They leave Rhodes at 8am and 4:30pm on the return journey, making it possible to see the island on a day trip. Fares start at $54. Car ferries operate on Tuesday and Thursday. They depart from Marmaris at 9am and take two hours. The return ferry is at 2pm. To reserve tickets, call **Turkish Maritime Lines**, ☎ 0252-4121532.

Once in Marmaris, co-operative boats ply their way from Marmaris to Içmeler and Turunç on most days. A co-operative has also been set up in Dalyan and boats run along the Delta to Iztuzu beach, Kaunos and the mud baths. The fares have increased since there is no longer competition, but the experience of drifting along through the reed beds to the beach is not to be missed.

BY TRAIN & TRAM

Adana is the only city in the region with a train station (☎ 0322-4533172). The *Icanadolou Mavi Tren* departs from Istanbul's Haydarpaşa terminal at 11:50pm and arrives in Adana at 6:35pm the next day. One-way tickets cost $21 for a reclining seat and $40 for a double sleeper compartment. The *Cukurova Mavi Tren* has extremely modern air-conditioned carriages. It departs Ankara at 8:15pm and arrives in Adana at 8:05am the next day. A one-way ticket costs $10.

In **Antalya**, a tram runs along the coast between Kaleiçi and the Konyaalti area, where the beach and Antalya Müze are based. You can hop on the tram opposite the museum and at the opposite end of Cumhuriyet Caddesi.

BY BUS

Buses take 14 hours to travel between Istanbul and **Marmaris**, and they take 10 hours from Ankara. Luckily, you can sleep most of the way on the overnight services.

Frequent services connect Izmir and Bodrum with Marmaris, which is three hours from Bodrum city center and four hours from Izmir. The bus station is on the Muğla Highway, northeast of the harbor. Check with your bus company whether there is a free shuttle bus from the *otogar* to the city center, about 1.5 km/one mile away. If not, take a taxi or *dolmus*.

To reach **Dalyan** by bus you will have to stop at the bus station in Ortaca, a town on the main highway, where you can pick up a *dolmus* for the remainder of the journey (15 minutes). The journey from Istanbul will take about 14 hours and from Bodrum it is three hours.

To travel along the Mediterranean Coast by bus from Dalaman International Airport, you have to first get to the Yeni Otogar (the new station), located on the main highway. Take a **Havaş** bus into the city center and change buses. The easier option is to take a taxi.

Fethiye is one hour east of Dalaman airport. Its bus station is located at the junction for Inönü Bulvari and Ölüdeniz Caddesi. *Dolmuses* run constantly into Fethiye town, Ölüdeniz and Kaya during the summer.

Buses also link Fethiye with Kalkan and Kaş. From Fethiye, it takes two hours to reach Kaş and another 45 minutes to reach Kalkan.

It's a long ride from Istanbul to **Antalya** (12 hours) and **Ankara** (nine hours). Given the cost of internal flights in Turkey, it is best to take a flight down to Antalya. Once in town, intercity buses and *dolmuses* travel to all destinations along the Mediterranean Coast, including to archaeological sites. Antalya's smart new bus station (Yeni Otobus Terminali) is northwest of the city center. The municipal bus departs twice an hour from a stop in between the two connecting glass terminal buildings in front of the taxi stand. The bus seems to take a lifetime to make the short trip into the city center. The advantage is that it is a fraction of the cost of a cab.

Buses run along the coastal road to the eastern Mediterranean towns of **Anamur** and **Silifke**. The cities of Mersin and Adana are well served by long-distance buses from Ankara and Istanbul. The journey takes 12-16 hours. Adana's bus station (☎ 0322-4282047) is five km/three miles from the city center. To reach Antakya, you need to change buses at Adana.

BY TAXIS & *DOLMUS*

Yellow taxis run on meters according to the time of day. Fares between midnight and 6am are 25% more expensive. If you are traveling between districts you can bargain for a flat rate fare.

Dolmuses are frequent, cheap and often air-conditioned. In **Marmaris**, they run through the resort out to the surrounding villages and down the peninsula to Içmeler, Turunç and Bozburun.

To reach **Dalyan**, you can take a bus from Marmaris, Dalaman or Fethiye to Ortaca and pick up a *dolmus* for the 20-minute drive into Dalyan's main square. *Dolmuses* depart from behind the post office in Dalyan and go to Iztuzu (Turtle) beach.

In **Fethiye**, *dolmuses* depart behind the mosque on Saffan Okkan Bulvari and from the *otogar* going to Ölüdeniz and Kaya. In **Ölüdeniz**, the *dolmuses* run down the hill to the beaches and restaurants. The bus station in **Kaş** is on the crossroads at the top of the town and it is possible to walk from there to most hotels. Patara Beach can be reached by *dolmus* from Kalkan and Kaş in summer.

Dolmuses criss-cross **Antalya** and go to Kemer, Manavgat, Side and surrounding ancient cities. There are five main *dolmus* stops in Antalya city center. To head west, the stop is on the highway above

Konyaalti Beach. To visit the ancient city of Aspendos, take a *dolmus* from the stop on Aspendos Bulvari, and to see Perge, *dolmuses* depart from Evliya Celebi Caddesi. Many *dolmuses* run along Cumhuriyet Caddesi and stop around Kalekapisi for Kaleiçi. In **Alanya**, the main *dolmus* stations are in the bazaar quarter and opposite the Tourist Information Office on Kale Sokak.

SIGHTSEEING

MUGLA

The Ottoman town of Muğla, on the foothills of Mount Asar, is the gateway to the resorts on the Mediterranean Coast. Muğla has some of the country's best examples of restored Ottoman and Greek houses on typically narrow lanes. As with much of the coast, Turks and Greeks lived together until the population exchange of 1923.

© Jan McGready

The warren-like streets of Mugla

A tour of Muğla should start at **Arasta Bazaar**, where handicrafts are sold from stalls that back on to an old barber's shop and a blacksmith. From the bazaar, head into the neighborhood of **Saburhane**, where grand two-storey houses feature ornate balconies, oversized wooden doors and courtyards that epitomize the Ottoman style.

On the way back down the hill from Saburhane, visit the **Muğla Museum** (☎ 0252-2144933; open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) based in an old prison opposite the courthouse. It has a collection of fossils that are more than five million years old.

MARMARIS

Sultan Süleyman spun the name Marmaris in the early 1500s. According to local folklore, Süleyman returned from an expedition to Rhodes to see the castle he had ordered to be built. Upon seeing it, he shouted *Mimar as! ("Hang the architect!")*. Süleyman might call for the heads of several architects if he saw the town now.

© Nnevid

Marmaris has descended into a down-market package holiday resort with hotels and bars crammed into every inch of space. It leaves visitors with no doubt that the emphasis here is on fun in the sun and the swill of beer.

Like Bodrum, Marmaris is a sailing hub with a thriving Blue Cruise and boat charter industry based in the giant **Netsel Marina**. Stone walkways connected by arched wooden bridges sweep around the marina. A ream of pink- and yellow-painted bars and restaurants line the quay, giving it a Disneyland quality. In the bay around Atatürk Sokak are lots of shoddy-looking boats offering cheap daily tours. In the middle of the promenade is the castle that caused Süleyman such angst. The pedestrian backstreets around the castle are full of bars and shops.

Marmaris Castle

The saving grace for Marmaris is its location. The pine-covered **Balaban Daği** is wrapped around the north of the resort. To the south, the **Bozburun** and **Datça peninsulas** stretch out into the Mediterranean Sea. Both are blissfully free of the ravages of tourism and are more pleasant places to idle away a couple of days.

> ***Sedir Adasi (marked turning 11 km/seven miles north of Marmaris) has a tiny, but perfect beach that was supposedly built to please Cleopatra. The forest behind it has the scattered ruins of the ancient city of Cedreae.***

EXCURSIONS FROM MARMARIS

Içmeler & Turunç

The highway leading out of Marmaris towards the Bozburun Peninsula is teeming with five-star resort hotels until it sweeps through the mountains to Içmeler, eight km/five miles away. Içmeler is smaller and the pace is less frenetic than Marmaris. It is not likely to stay that way for long, as development has been swift. The sandy beach, which flanks the bay, can barely be seen for bodies in summer.

Leaving Içmeler, the road continues through the mountains on a series of hairpin curves with mesmerizing views at the spots where the peaks divide. To really appreciate the landscape without risking a serious accident, take one of the water taxis that sail from Marmaris to Içmeler and Turunç, 21 km/13 miles from town.

Turunç has long been an escape from the rowdiness of Marmaris. The fir-tree shrouded mountains curve around its crescent-shaped bay and plummet into the sea. Sadly, developers and tourists have discovered the cove and several restaurants and hotels now sit on the slopes behind the coarse sand beach.

To see how beautiful Turunç once was, you have to navigate the mountain road for another five km/three miles to Kumlubuk, an isolated village lies on a rough road in the middle of olive groves and pine forests. Here, you can flake out on the long beach or walk to the ancient city of Amos.

THE BOZBURUN PENINSULA

West of Turunç, back on the road from Marmaris, is **Orhaniye**. The village has a quirky beach that comes and goes with shifting sands. It also has a busy marina. Three km/1.8 miles from Orhaniye is Turut, which is becoming popular with jeep safari tourists who wade in the waterfalls flowing through a small canyon. The relic of a mill stands on the banks.

Orhaniye

Continuing south, the peninsula becomes more barren and peaceful. The coves are rocky and backed by olive groves, fig and almond trees. The village of **Bozburun**, which lends its name to the peninsula, is southwest of Turgut. The inhabitants of Bozburun are known for their skill at building wooden gulets, traditional Turkish sailboats. Soğut sits on a cove south of Bozburun. Mountains are stacked upon each other and some look as if they have fallen into the sea, creating a jagged coastline with only the occasional house in sight. **Bozukkale**, on the tip of the peninsula, has the ruins of the city of **Loryma**, including a castle built to protect the entrance to the gulf. The ruins are difficult to reach by car and, consequently, are best seen on a boat tour.

SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (✯) are worth a visit. Two stars (✯✯) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (✯✯✯), just do it. You won't be sorry.

THE DATÇA PENINSULA

The Datça Peninsula, or Reşadiye Peninsula as it was known during the days of Sultan Reşat, juts out to divide the Aegean Sea from the Mediterranean Sea. It is wild, heavily wooded and almost untouched by tourism. The easiest way to explore the area from the Aegean Coast is by taking a ferry from Bodrum and then driving or cycling around. Buses also run between Datça and Marmaris.

The town of Datça, on the south of the peninsula, is still a sleepy resort. The constant, strong winds make it a haven for sailors.

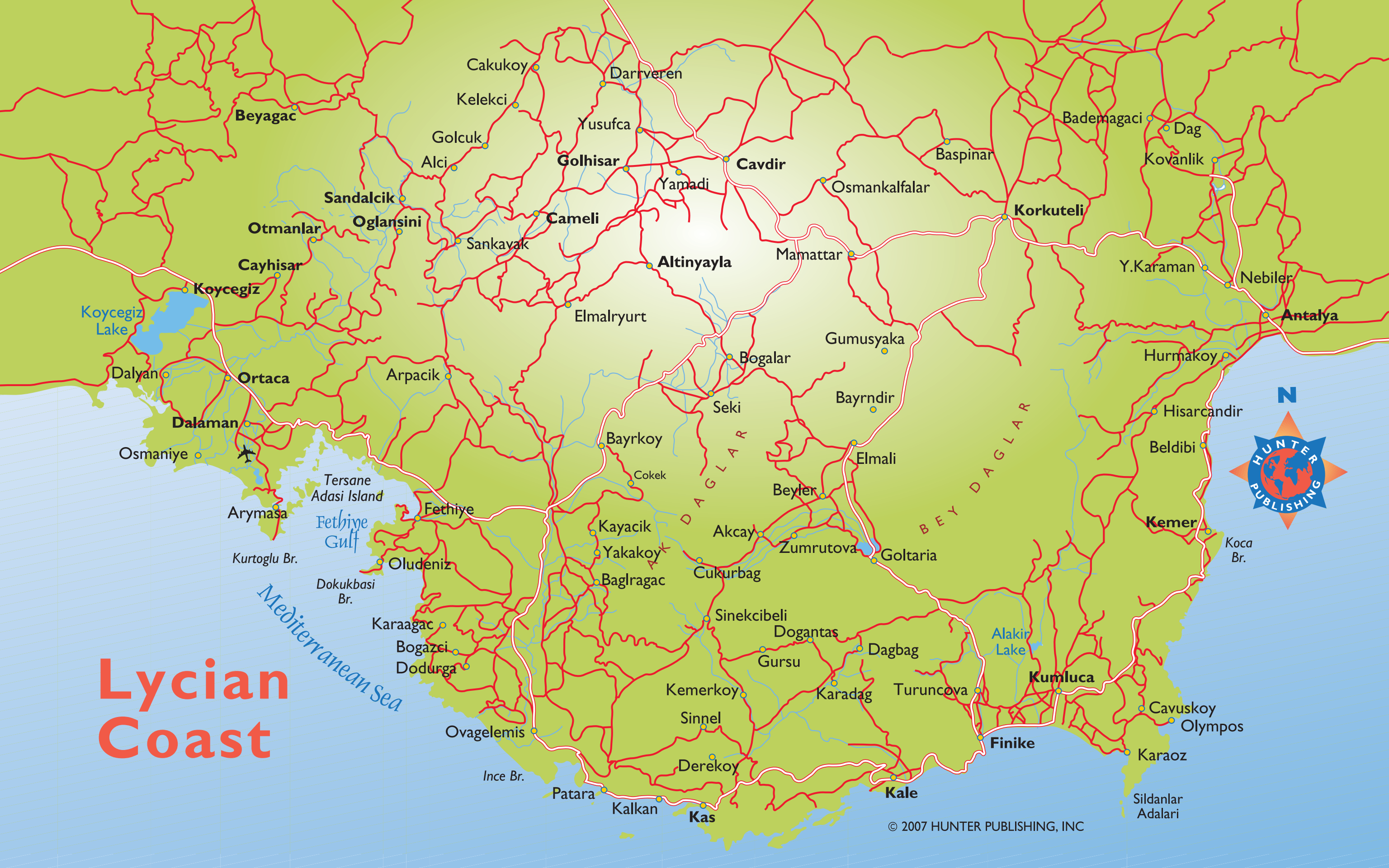
KNIDOS ✯

The pathway that runs along the peninsula to Knidos has been widened, but it is still a rough ride. Luckily, the scenery is captivating enough to merit the effort. Along the way, stop at one of the wooden jetties on the coast to dangle your feet in the water and watch the tour boats drop their anchors. The lighthouse on the rocky tip of the peninsula is the place to linger while the sun drops like a fireball.

Knidos was the most famous of the cities founded by the Dorians. The Persians captured it after the Dorians failed to dig a channel that would have turned the peninsula into an island.

The most compelling ruin at Knidos is the **theater**, even though sections of it have been lost. Nothing remains of the nude statue of Aphrodite, which once stood above a temple at the city's western edge. The rampart walls of the city run along the peninsula and drop right down into the sea.

Opposite: The wild Datça Peninsula (© Jan McGready)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Sankavak
Cayhisar
Koycegiz
Altinyayla
Koycegiz Lake
Elmalryurt
Dalyan
Ortaca
Arpacik
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Osmaniye
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Arymasa
Fethiye Gulf
Fethiye
Kurtoglu Br.
Oludeniz
Dokukbasi Br.
Karaagac
Bogazci
Dodurga
Ovagelemis
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DALYAN ✯✯

Dalaman is a farming town that has had an enormous airport dropped into the middle of it. Few travelers hang around in its downtown; most use the airport as a gateway to resorts along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts.

The closest town is Dalyan, 27 km/17 miles northwest of Dalaman. Dalyan is set in the middle of the Dalyan Çayi, a broad creek that is surprisingly unspoilt. The reed-backed creek flows between the Mediterranean Sea and Koyceğiz Lake. The wetlands have become home to many fish and birds.

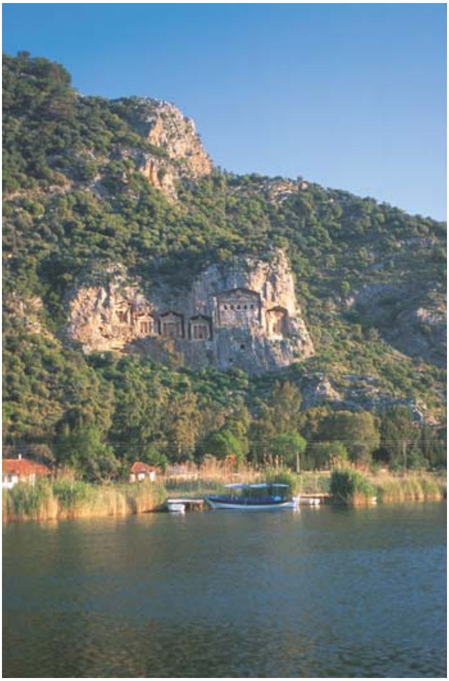


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Rock tombs at Dalyan

It is possible to swim in the Delta as long as you look out for boats and the occasional turtle.

The main street, with its cafés and guesthouses, backs on to the water. On the opposite bank are imposing Lycian rock tombs, their façades carved right out of the bedrock. The temples were the last resting place of the kings who once ruled ancient Kaunos.

KAUNOS

The ancient city of Kaunos is dramatically situated on a broad hillside overlooking the sea and the delta. The tragic tale of Kaunos' eponymous founder is equally evocative.

KAUNOS' LOST LOVE

Kaunos, the son of Apollo's son Miletos and the water nymph Kyanee, was in love with his twin sister Byblis. After running away in an attempt to flee this forbidden affair, he founded a city on a remote hillside. Byblis led a futile search for her brother until the water nymphs transformed her into a spring while she lay crying on the ground.

According to the ancient historian Herodotus, Kaunos was the capital of the region between Caria and Lycia. From the delta, it is a 10-minute walk up the hill past farmers' fields to the ruins at Kaunos (open). Among the monuments are churches, a temple, an agora and columned gallery.

© Hans-Heinrich Hoffman

The most impressive sight is the **theater**, which once seated 5,000 people. It remains intact except for the stage building. A few local women sit under the great plane tree squeezing fresh orange juice for travelers.

The old harbor lies at the center of the ruins. Its sheltered location helped Kaunos to become an important trading region until it completely silted up and was abandoned. Magnificent defense walls surround the city.

IZTUZU BEACH

A 40-minute boat ride from the town takes you to the point where the delta meets the sea. The five-km/three-mile sandbar of Iztuzu Beach divides the two.

© Samantha Lafferty

Iztuzu Beach is a nesting area for the endangered Mediterranean Caretta Caretta turtle and it rivals the more renowned Mediterranean beaches of Ölüdeniz and Patara, near Kalkan. Immense mountains protrude from either end of the sand. Behind the beach are tall yellow reeds and the meandering Delta. Development is outlawed here and the lone building is a dilapidated boat hut.

Visit Iztuzu in April or October when it is warm and windy and you can walk the length of the beach with only a couple of kite-flyers.

MUD GLORIOUS MUD

At the opposite end of the creek are Dalyan's mud baths (open daily 7:30am-6pm; entrance fee). The pools of hot mud are the town's most popular attraction. Boats from the center of town make their way out to the bathing area, where groups of tourists stand around in the sun waiting for the sulfur-rich mud caked on their bodies to dry. After rinsing in the open-air showers, take a plunge in the thermal pool.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Rolling in the mud

At the far end of the lake is **Sultaniye Kaplicalari** (thermal springs), first used during Kaunos' time. The Byzantines rebuilt the baths and it is these ruins that are sunk in the lake. Here, you can have a more civilized (although less entertaining) mud bath. You can soak in a seriously hot pool afterwards. The mud baths not only cleanse the skin, they have anti-aging properties. You just have to get used to the fetid smell of sulphur.

> **TIP:** *The mud baths are great fun. Do not let that be spoiled by losing your wallet. Leave credit cards and cash at your hotel. You will need only small change. Also, take a towel and a swimsuit that you do not mind being ruined.*

THE ROAD TO FETHIYE

Heading west from Dalaman, the road curves through the mountains until it reaches Fethiye Körfezi (Fethiye Gulf) and the exclusive yachting village of **Göcek**. The 30-km/19-mile journey between Göcek and Fethiye passes coastal villages and beaches on one side, with plains and mountains on the other.

FETHIYE

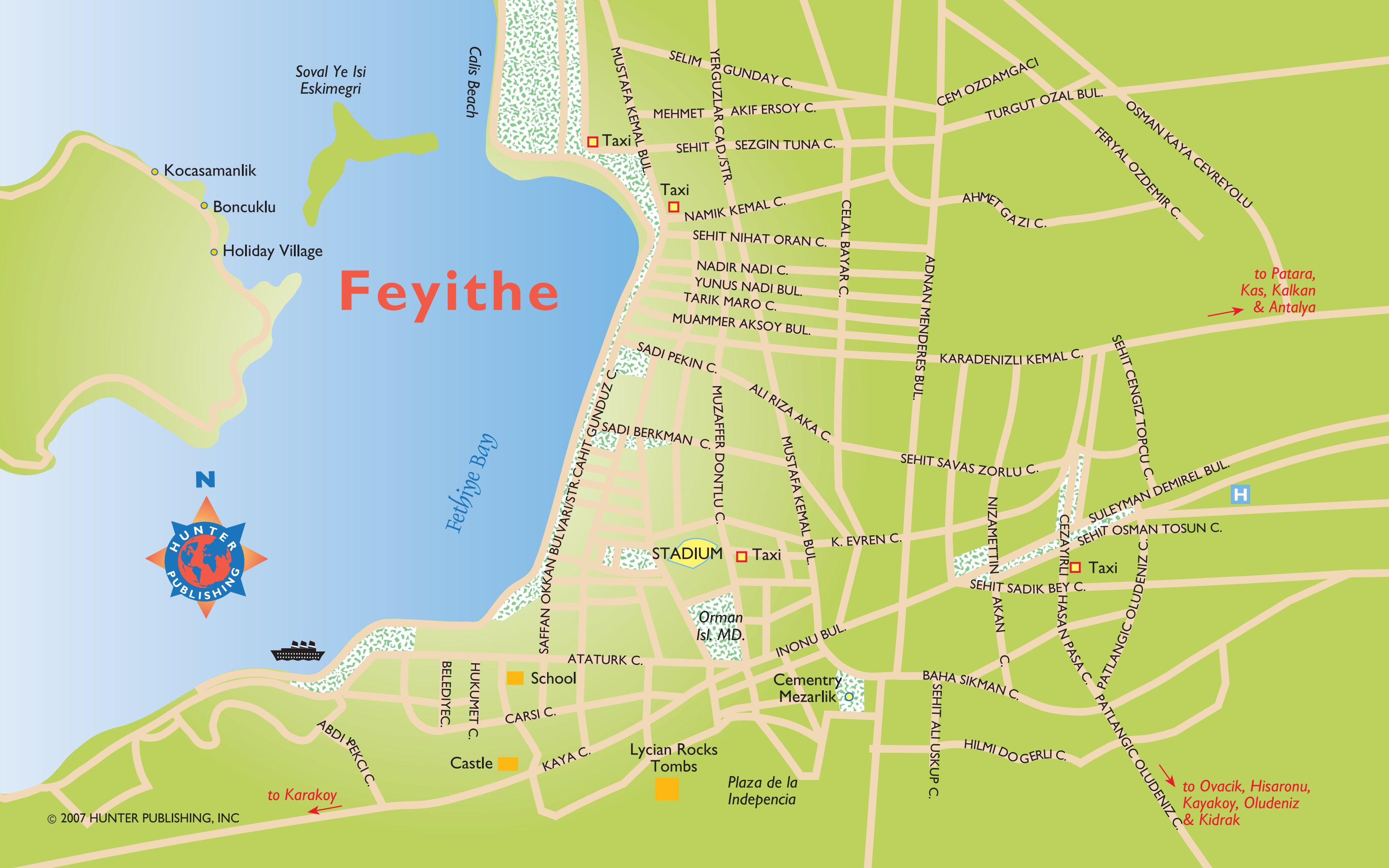
The harbor town of Fethiye has been transformed from a backpacker haven to a thriving tourist hub. The Blue Cruise has been the catalyst for this transition. Gulets depart daily during the season for tours of the crystalline bays and islands scattered off the rocky coast.

Fethiye makes a good base for exploring the ancient cities to the south and the Blue Lagoon at Ölüdeniz. It is also the starting point for the Lycian Way, the long-distance trekking route along the Tekke Peninsula to Antalya (see page 393).

There has been a town at Fethiye since Telmessos was built in the fifth century BC. A century later, the Lycians included it in the confederation. The town was renamed in 1934 to honor a pilot, Fethi Bey, who became a hero during the War of Independence. Despite Fethiye's ancient roots, it is decidedly contemporary, mainly because earthquakes in 1856 and 1957 destroyed most of the relics.

Fethiye has enough attractions to keep travelers on the land for at least an afternoon. Starting at the harbor, behind the Tourist Information Office, is the **Roman theater**, dating from the second century. From here, walk through the bazaar quarter of Paspatur on to Çarşi Caddesi, where there are a few Lycian rock tombs and the final remains of the **Crusader Fort** (open access).

Steep steps leading off Kaya Caddesi, just behind the castle, go up to a more grand rock tomb which, according to an inscription on a pillar, is dedicated to Amynthas, son of Hermapias. It is becoming a sad resting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INONU BUL.
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BAHA SIKMAN C.
SEHIT ALI USKUP C.
HILMI DOGERLI C.
to Ovacik, Hisaronu, Kayakoy, Oludeniz & Kidrak
ATATURK C.
School
BELEDIYEC.
HUKUMET C.
CARSI C.
Castle
KAYA C.
Lycian Rocks Tombs
Plaza de la Indepencia
ABDI PEKCI C.
to Karakoy

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place. The two columns on the façade are crumbling away and the huge bronze door has a section missing.

Back down the hill, just north of Atatürk Caddesi, is the **Fethiye Museum** (open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-6pm; entrance fee) with an ethnography section and archaeology finds from Xanthos and Kaunos.

Cafés and bars can be found on the hotch-potch of lanes in Paspatur. The streets here are relaxed during the day and raucous at night. The bazaar itself has succumbed to tourism with a tacky offering of hubble-bubble pipes, fez hats and stuffed camels. Somehow, Paspatur still manages to be appealing.

Fethiye itself does not have a beach. Instead you can take a boat tour around the bays where you can swim, or alternatively take a water taxi to Çalis Beach. The four-km/2.5-mile shingle beach has a mountain backdrop and plenty of restaurants and guesthouses along an uninspiring stone promenade. At its far end is Eski Çalis, where the scenery returns to a more natural state and there is a quieter stretch of sandy beach in front of the Hang Loose Windsurfing & Surf Café. Most travelers in search of a beach head for the Blue Lagoon at Ölüdeniz.

© Samantha Lafferty

The Blue Lagoon, Ölüdeniz

EXCURSIONS FROM FETHIYE

Route 400 between Fethiye and Kalkan is dotted with ancient cities that can be explored by car, taxi or on a jeep safari tour.

Tlos

From Fethiye, head inland through Esenköy, across the bridge over the Esen Çayi and turn right for the ruins of Tlos (45 km/28 miles from Fethiye; open daily 8am-5pm; entrance fee). Tlos is the oldest and one of the most prominent Lycian ancient cities and its graveyard on the rocky acropolis is filled with elaborate tombs. The most spectacular was dedicated to Bellerophon, the mythological hero who lived here with his winged horse Pegasus. Walking around the tombs and other ruins on the acropolis requires a bit of scrambling. Once at the top, it is possible to see for miles across the plains, where the decaying walls of a Roman city lie. Farther along the road, on the left, is a small amphitheater.

Continue along to the village of Yaka and its **Yaka Park trout farm** (☎ 0252-6340391; open daily 9am-10pm; credit cards not accepted). Set over a series of terraces on a hill, the farm is a popular place to stop for lunch after visiting Tlos, especially with children. Just try not to squirm too much at the bar, which has a carved-out top full of tiny fish desperately trying to flee the fingers dipped into the water.

Saklikent

Continue south along the same route to Saklikent (50 km/31 miles from Fethiye; open daily 8am-7pm; entrance fee), an 18-km long canyon with freezing water gushing through it. Saklikent means "Hidden City," an apt title given the depth of the dark gorge. A stop on the jeep safari tour route, each summer it is teeming with visitors who walk along the wooden platforms that stretch for a couple of hundred meters. More adventurous travelers can continue beyond the platforms by wading

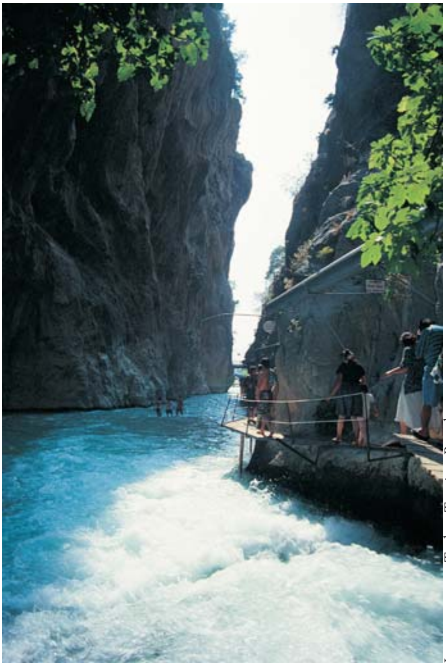


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

through the water and navigating the rocks. A makeshift village of floating restaurants has built up around the canyon.

> **TIP:** *The wooden platforms at Saklikent can be very slippery. You should wear sneakers, rather than beach shoes.*

Pinara, Sidyma & Letoon

Turn off Route 400 into Minare Village, on the foothills of Mount Akdağ, to reach Pinara (45 km/28 miles from Fethiye; open daily 8am-6pm; entrance fee). The city was a colony of nearby Xanthos before becoming an independent member of the Lycian League. The earliest part of the city, dating from the fourth century BC, is at the top of a cliff, with its trademark tombs. The remains of the Roman city lie on the smaller hill.

Follow Route 400 south past Esen village for six km/four miles before taking a right turn and climbing up a rough road for about an hour to reach Sidyma. Only serious followers of Roman history will want to make the trip to see the tombs here. The site has been almost swallowed by the modern village of Dodurga.

The more interesting site of Letoon (55 km/34 miles from Fethiye; reached via a turning off Route 400 at Kinik) was the religious center of the Lycian Federation. It was the location of three Hellenistic temples dedicated to Leto and her twins Apollo and Artemis, the ruling deities of Lycia.

THE LEGEND OF LATO

According to legend, Leto arrived in the city after fleeing Mount Olympos to protect her children from Hera, who was jealous of them. The local shepherds drove her off, but the wolves protected her. In return, she named the area Lycia, or Lykos, which means wolf in Greek. Meanwhile, the shepherds were turned into frogs. The marshlands around the site are still inhabited by frogs and terrapins.

Restoration work is continuing on the site (open daily in summer 7:30am-7pm; closes at 5pm in winter; entrance fee).

Xanthos

When the Persian army marched into Xanthos (475-450 BC), the warriors of the city gathered their women, children, slaves and treasure in the citadel and set fire to it. The men then fought on until the last one had been killed. The Xanthians were so proud of their magnificent city they preferred mass suicide to Persian rule, according to ancient historian Herodotus.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Rock tombs, Xanthos

Xanthos was later rebuilt and flourished under the reign of the Syrian monarch Antiochus III. Then, in 42 BC, Roman Emperor Brutus besieged the city, slaughtering its inhabitants and razing the city once again. Following his victory over Brutus, Mark Antony ploughed money into rebuilding Xanthos, which became the capital of Lycia during the second century BC.

The ill-fated city was raided for a third time when British explorer Sir Charles Fellows discovered it in 1838. He returned three years later and shipped the best reliefs and artifacts to Britain, where they are on display in the British Museum's Lycian Room.

On entering the site, the first relic is the **Monument of Nereids**. Built in 400BC in the form of a temple, the monument had friezes depicting

everyday life in the city and reliefs with haunting war scenes. Fellows stripped these off.

The most interesting remains are the two tombs that stand above the theater and the **obelisk** that has tumbled over in the agora. The **Harpies Tomb**, which has become the symbol of Xanthos, had reliefs showing sirens carrying the souls of the dead off the Island of the Blessed. Nearby **Tower Tomb** has a pillar box-shaped structure rising out of it. The carvings at the entrance to the burial chamber resemble windows. (Kinik village; open 8am-7pm in summer, closes at 5pm in winter; entrance fee.)

> ***Turkey is the birthplace of King Midas, who legend says turned everything he touched into gold, and of St. Nicholas, popularly known as Santa Claus.***

ÖLÜDENIZ ✯✯

From Fethiye, the road runs up the hill into the pastel architectural disaster that the once ramshackle village of Hisaronu has become. From here, a right-hand fork leads to the top of the hill, and you get the first glimpse of one of the most photographed beaches in the Mediterranean.

A blaze of white sand curves across the dead-calm cobalt waters of the lagoon. The pine trees that cover half of the beach bend into the water, and forest-covered mountains add to the spell.

The lagoon beach has finally been protected as a national park (entrance fee), although this does not prevent it from being flooded with tourists in summer. Belceğiz public beach has been overrun by hotels built to accommodate them.

KELEBEK VADISI (BUTTERFLY VALLEY)

Not so long ago, travelers in search of utopia would sail from Ölüdeniz over to Butterfly Valley, a deep canyon at the base of the jagged Baba Dağ. The valley is protected to preserve its colony of butterflies, which can be spotted between May and September. The beach is untouched except for a few tree houses. Deep in the canyon, waterfalls shoot down through the trees. It is still idyllic, only now you have to share it.

The more remote beaches of Kidirak and Kabak, either side of Butterfly Valley, are accessible by boat or long walks from Ölüdeniz. Up the

Opposite: Blue Cruise boats, Ölüdeniz (courtesy Turkey Tourist Board) steep cliff above Butterfly Valley is the hamlet of **Faralya**. There is no easy to way to reach the village. It forms part of the Lycian Way trek or can be reached by car along a vertiginous road from Ölüdeniz.

KAYAKOY

Kayakoy is the subject of a novel by Louis de Bernieres entitled *Birds Without Wings*. The book is likely to draw in tourists and create an unwelcome commotion on the lane that leads from Fethiye into the village.

© Samantha Lafferty

Ghost village, Karakoy

Until then, Kaya remains a lonely place. A stairway leads up a steep hill where crumbling houses and churches resemble an abandoned film set. The stone façades of the buildings are still standing, yet the sides and roofs have long since decayed.

The village is a reminder of the lives interrupted during the population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Rather than live in the houses left behind by the Greeks, the Turks built new ones at the foot of the hill. This respect for their former neighbors has not stopped women selling pendants and scarves from stalls at the entrance to the old village and from the courtyard of one of the churches. There is also an entrance fee to walk among the haunting remains.

PATARA ✪✪

The Romans called this harbor town "the chosen city." Since then, shifting sands have swallowed many of Patara's 2000-year-old ruins. Yet that only amplifies the mystery of the beach.

Patara has had an illustrious, if offbeat, past. It was the birthplace of Apollo (an oracle at a temple dedicated to him predicted omens during the winter) and of St. Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra who became known as Santa Claus.

As the major naval and trading port of Lycia, Patara was a wealthy city. The Romans improved the harbor and used it as a base to sail to eastern provinces. Patara's importance led the Romans to move the seat of the provincial governor there. With the spread of Christianity, St. Paul sailed from Patara to Jerusalem.

Arab piracy in the mid-seventh century led to constant raids that finished off Lycia, and Patara was reduced to a village. Between the 10th and 15th centuries, the Byzantines used Patara as a military base, although its population and fortunes continued to dwindle. Eventually, sand engulfed the harbor and it was plagued with mosquitoes that spread a deadly malarial plague.

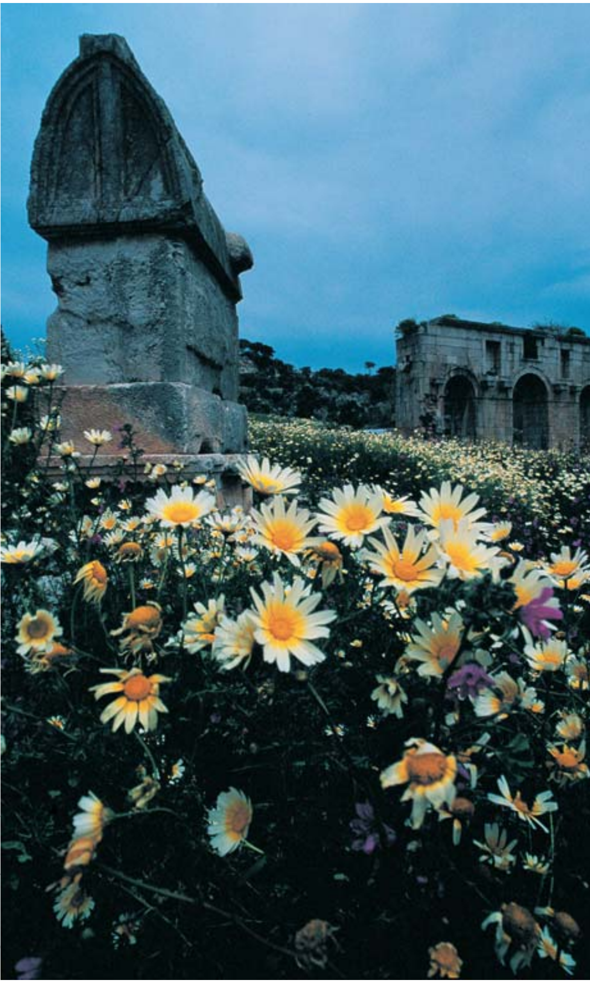


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Springtime, Patara

Excavations at Patara (open daily 7:30am-7pm in summer; 8:30am-5pm in winter; entrance fee) have revealed some of the monuments that lay buried beneath the dunes and the marshland that was once the harbor. Along the road and meadows at the entrance to the city are monumental tombs that have survived intact. Just by the roadside is a gate built as a symbol of victory by the Romans. Only three of its arches remain. Beyond them are a Roman bath and a road sign showing the distances between Lycian cities. The sign is believed to be the world's oldest. The city's theater is evocatively half-covered in sand and nearby is a deep cistern carved into the rock.

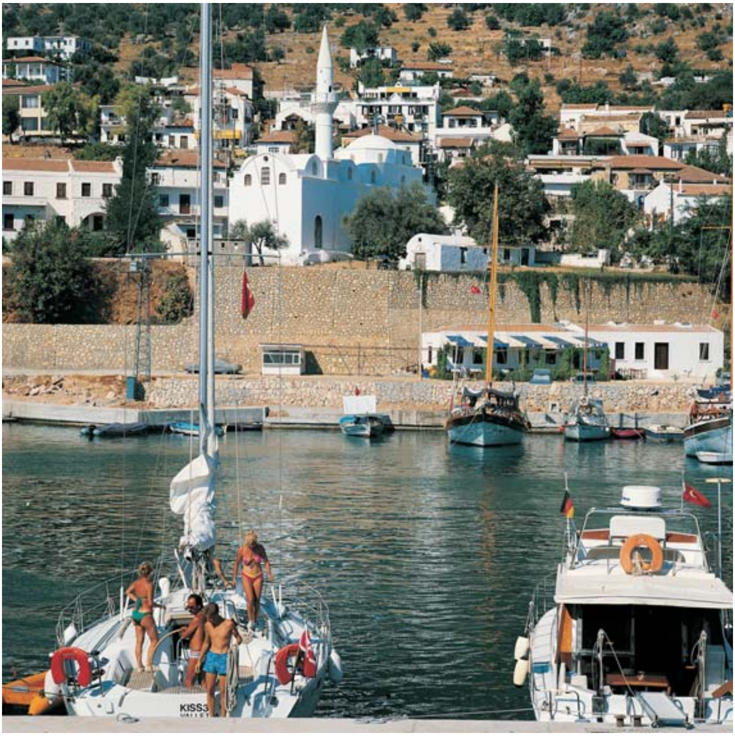
After wandering through the ancient city, kick off your sandals to saunter along Patara's honey-colored beach, which stretches for 18 km/11 miles with barely a shack in sight. The rolling sands have created desert-like dunes between the beach and the forests behind it. A few cafés and pensions can be found in the village of Gelemis.

To reach Patara by car from Fethiye, follow Route 400 and take the turning for Gelemis-Patara (80 km/50 miles). Follow the route southwest from Kalkan (19 km/12 miles). *Dolmuses* run from the main stop in Kalkan, near the post office, into Gelemis. From there, you can walk to the ruins and beach.

KALKAN ✯

Kalkan was a bohemian merchants' village built on a series of steep cobbled stone terraces that drop down to the sea. An influx of wealthy families from Turkey and the UK has turned Kalkan into a chic resort.

Playground in Kalkan (image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)



Many of the whitewashed Ottoman-Greek houses have been restored as stylish restaurants and boutique hotels with fabulous rooftop terraces, giving sea views. Impossibly stylish beach clubs have been built into the craggy hillside on the outskirts of the village. Even though the development is tasteful, it threatens to engulf Kalkan's tiny harbor.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Kaputas Beach

Along the rugged coastline between Kalkan and Kaş is **Kaputaş Beach**, a broad swirl of fine yellow sand that serves as the beach for both towns. The water is shallow and the seabed shelves down gradually. The only downside is the proximity of the highway, which clings to the rocks. For drivers, this is an inspiring coastal route.

KAS ✯

Arriving into Kaş, the view as you reach the crest of the hill is impressive. Spread out below is a narrow peninsula surrounded by numerous small islands and bays. Kaş is engulfed by green hills, although the early stages of development can be seen along the peninsula.

A laid-back coastal town, Kaş is squeezed in between green mountains and the turquoise Mediterranean Sea. A series of cobblestoned lanes lead off from the harbor and main square, where a statue of Atatürk acts as the central point in the town.

The streets behind the harbor have a mix of handicraft shops, restaurants and whitewashed houses swathed in hot pink bougainvillea. To the east, along the rocky coastline, are pebble beaches and swimming terraces. Beyond the harbor to the west, a Hellenistic amphitheater has been cut into the hillside. The stone terraces look out over the

Greek island of Castellerizo (Meis in Turkish), which is so close you can make out the Greek houses.

Known in Hellenistic times as ancient Antiphellos, the town was a port for Phellos, an ancient city on the hilltop behind Kaş. Antiphellos grew wealthy on its export of sponges and cedar wood used for shipbuilding.

The Lycians believed in the immortality of the spirit and regarded tombs and sarcophagi as decorative monuments, placing them prominently around their cities. In Kaş, you can see Lycian rock tombs carved into cliffs and stone sarcophagi on its streets. The most prominent sarcophagus is at the end of Uzunçarşi Sokaği, the town's main street.

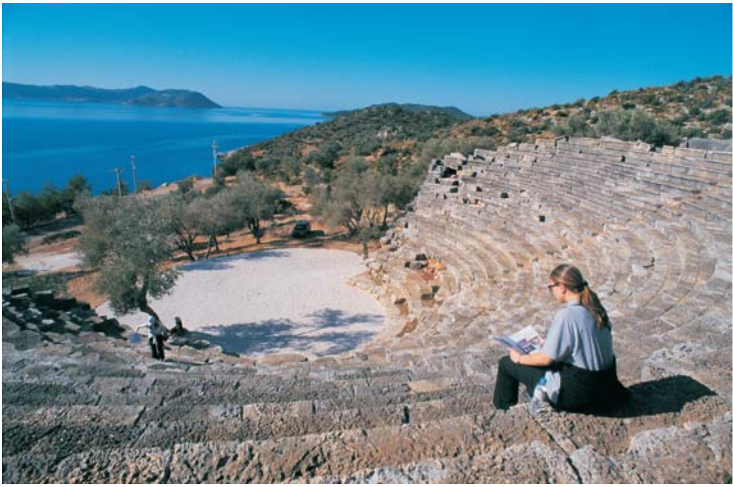


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

A seat with a view

EXCURSIONS FROM KAS

Waterlogged Ruins & the Castle of Simena

Sail on a glass-bottomed boat or, for those with a spirit for adventure, paddle a sea kayak out into the clear waters around the fishing village of Ucagiz to hunt for the sunken remains around the island of Kekova. Roofless houses with their stone steps, city walls, an ancient sewer and the remains of a sarcophagus can all be seen just below the turquoise water. The ruins were submerged beneath the sea in an earthquake 3,000 years ago. Kekova is a conservation area and swimming and diving are prohibited to stop people taking souvenirs.

There are plenty of organized excursions departing from the harbor in Kaş. Alternatively, arrive early in the morning to hire a boat from one of the fishermen in Ucagiz. A private tour will give you more time to explore the ruins around Kekova and those of the ancient site of Aperlae, west of Ucagiz, which are often overlooked. Before you hop aboard, spend some time in sleepy Ucagiz seeking out the remarkable Lycian tombs at the far end of the village.

The untouched village of **Kale** (ancient Simena) is east of Kekova. It is accessible only by water and can be visited as part of a day-trip to Kekova. Boats moor by a rickety wooden jetty for travelers to make the trek up the hill to the medieval **Byzantine fortress** of the Knights of St. John and the small **theater** within its grey and orange-stone walls. A couple of sarcophagi lie on the hill and below are the ruins of public baths. The few inhabitants of Kale live practically on top of one another in stone houses woven along a hotchpotch of paths.

DEMRE & MYRA

Back on land, take Route 400 30 km/19 miles west from Ucagiz to the seaside town of Demre, also confusingly known as Kale. The fields in this region are swamped with makeshift greenhouses stuffed with tomatoes.

The main reason for passing through Demre is to see the Lycian **funeral tombs** of Myra haphazardly carved one on top of the other into the austere grey rock. The two sets of tombs were once vividly painted in red, blue and yellow, according to Sir Charles Fellows, the British explorer. Inside the tombs, reliefs often depicted scenes from the life of the deceased.

Rock-carved tombs at Myra

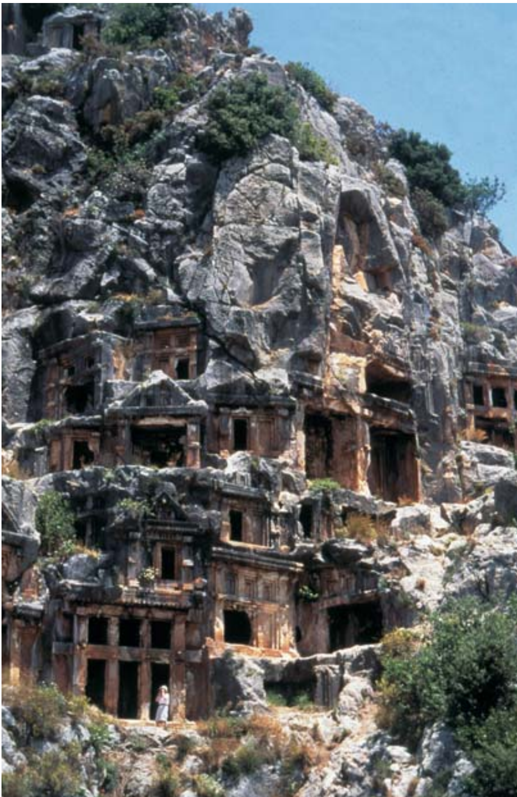


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Myra is one km/.6 miles north of Demre (open daily 7:30am-7pm in summer; 8am-5:30pm in winter; entrance fee). Myra grew into the principal city of Lycia during Byzantine times, surpassing Xanthos. It was the seat of a Christian bishop and was visited by St. Paul. An Arab onslaught destroyed the city in the seventh century, but fortunately, they left the funeral tombs alone.

Below the tombs on the cliff is the largest **theater** in Lycia. Its seating is in good shape, although the stage building has collapsed. Scattered around the giant rocks that have tumbled from the stage building are the macabre carvings of tragic and comedic masks.

> ***The city's grandest monument, the Temple of Artemis, was demolished by St. Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra, in his zeal to wipe out paganism.***

St. Nicholas preached in Myra during the fourth century and his cult spread after his death. The **Church of St. Nicholas** (Noel Baba Kilesi in the town center; open daily 8:30am-4:30pm; entrance fee), is a reconstructed sixth-century version of the original. The colorful frescoes on the walls and floor of the interior of the church were restored in 2005. Nothing of St. Nicholas remains at the church after a band of merchants carted off the contents of his tomb to Italy in the 11th century.

Church of St. Nicholas (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

ST. NICHOLAS, AKA SANTA CLAUS

The story of Santa Claus begins with the birth of Nicholas in Patara in the third century. He was orphaned when he was a child and left with a fortune. Raised as a devout Christian, Nicholas believed he should use his wealth to aid the sick and needy.

After his death, many stories were told of his generosity. One such tale recounts how he came to the aid of three poor girls who were to be sold into slavery because they did not have the dowries required to get a good husband. Mysteriously, three bags of gold were thrown through an open window and landed by the fireplace where stockings or shoes had been left to dry. The story gave rise to the practice of placing presents in stockings for children. Another story suggests he revived three boys who had been cut by an evil butcher. Over time, St. Nicholas became the patron of Greece, Russia, unmarried girls, children, sailors, merchants and pawnbrokers.

FINIKE

Known throughout Turkey for its enormous sweet oranges and apple orchards, Finike has clung to its agricultural heritage and rejected the kind of mass tourism that could have swamped its innumerable sandy coves. It has a few creaking Ottoman houses, but little else of historical interest.

The D-635 road heading north of Finike heads through the rugged **Taurus Mountains** passing **Lymra** (reached via a turning at Turuncova; 11 km/seven miles; open access). Lymra was the fourth century BC capital of Pericles, who ruled a section of Lycia. His tomb, the Heroon, sits at the top of a vast necropolis set atop of a steep hill.

Venture another 21 km/13 miles into the Taurus Mountains to the basilica, theater and agora of the ancient city of **Arykanda**, situated at the end of a plunging valley. A pathway from the theater winds around the mountain to a bathhouse and a gymnasium with high arched ceilings and mosaic floors. Arykanda (entrance fee) is one of the lesser-known sites along the coast and you can selfishly revel in the view from the gymnasium across the flower-strewn hillside.

OLYMPOS

Push back thick vines and centuries-old pine trees to uncover shattered temples, columns and bathhouses strewn along either side of Ulupinar Stream, which trickles into the sea. The pathway opens up for a few meters to reveal tombs and the remains of a monumental gateway before the ruins are lost again. A crumbling bridge lies on the northern side. Opposite is a church whose frescoes are now invisible. It is difficult to get close to some of the ruins because much of the woodland area off the scratchy stone passageway is a swamp.

© Radoslaw Botev

Roman bath

Olympos dates from the Hellenistic age and became a major force in the Lycian League. During this time, the bay of Antalya was under pressure from pirates, who posed a threat to the interests of the Roman Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. As most of the pirates lived in Olympos, the city aroused interest in Rome. Roman commander Servilius Iscauricus Vulso captured the pirate chief, Zeniketes, in 78 BC, freeing the area of pirates. By this time, the Romans had lost patience with Olympos for sheltering the pirates and threw it out of the League.

The peak of development in Olympos came at the beginning of the third century. The latter part of that century saw a resurgence of pirate activity with such extensive looting that the city shrank into a village. Attempts by the knights of Venice, Genoa and Rhodes to revive it were short-lived. Control of the Mediterranean Sea had already passed to the Ottomans and Olympos was abandoned in the mid-15th century.

ÇIRALI ✯✯

Behind the wistful ruins of Olympos, forest-drenched mountains plunge into the sea along the endless swirl of platinum sand and shingle. A few tree houses and shacks serving drinks stand back from the beach. Driftwood and a couple of upturned boats lie along the shoreline. The combination creates a spine-tingling sight.

Çirali is a backpacker haven and a conservation site. The fields around the village are ablaze with oleander and wild orchids. It is a 10 minute-walk from Çirali along the empty beach to the ruins of Olympos (open access; entrance fee when the ticket booth is manned).

© Journey Anatolia

Heavenly Çirali Beach

> **NOTE:** *Olympos and Çirali are difficult to reach without a car. Head southwest along Route 400 (80 km/50 miles) from Antalya or west (115 km/71 miles) from Kas until the sharp turning signposted for Çirali. It is another seven km/four miles down a series of hairpin bends into the village.* Dolmuses *crawl along the coast road and can drop you at the turning, where you can hitch a ride or flag down a taxi to go the rest of the way. Some pensions in Çirali will pick you up at the crossroads.*

CHIMAERA

On a hillside behind Olympos is a sacred site where flames spit out of the rocks, giving rise to the Greek myth of a fire-breathing monster with a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail.

According to the tale, Bellerophon, a handsome and charismatic boy, accidentally killed his brother while hunting. He was punished to death. But the King did not want to commit the act and so sent the boy to a nearby village with a letter for the ruler of that province to kill him. After Bellerophon was entertained by the royal court for several days, the ruler was horrified to hear he would have to sentence to the boy to death.

Instead, he sent the boy to kill a monster that was eating local livestock. Bellerophon jumped on to the back of his winged horse Pegasus and destroyed the monster by picking it up by its tail and crashing it into the ground. The legend suggests the insatiable flames from the monster still permeate the rocks. Reality hunters can choose to believe that it is leaking methane gas. The phenomenon is best enjoyed at dusk. Chimaera (open access; entrance fee) is a 20-minute walk up steep steps to the flames and it is recommended that you take a torch for the descent.

PHASELIS

A lazy couple of hours boat ride or short (18-km/11-mile) drive along Route 400 north of Olympos is Phaselis. Founded by colonists from Rhodes in 690 BC, Phaselis remained a separate province until the reign of Emperor Vespasian, who united Pamphylia and Lycia.

When Alexander the Great started his expedition from Macedonia to India in 334 BC, he marched with his army to Phaselis. He intended to conquer all Lycian and Pamphylian cities because of their strategic location and natural materials. He spent a winter in Phaselis and was so surprised by the way people embraced him he felt the need to contribute to the city.

At the time, Phaselis was in conflict with the people of Marmara, who regularly stole its crops, damaged the fields and even kidnapped its women. Alexander organized a deadly expedition to Marmara. Almost overnight, he wiped out the rival city. The men who were left in Marmara set fire to it, committing suicide.

It is possible to sail to Phaselis on one of the small boats that leave the beach in Çirali. Larger disco boats depart from Kemer, although their pulsating music detracts from the atmosphere within the ancient city.

The allure of the Lycian Coast (© Middle Earth Travel)

> **NOTE:** *Not all boat trips offer a transfer to the ruins; some simply serve a constant stream of raki to tourists who have little interest in exploring them. So check when booking a trip.*

HADRIAN'S ARCH: Phaselis (open 8:30am-7:30pm in summer; closes at 5:30pm in winter; entrance fee) reached the height of its fortune during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. His second visit to the city in 131 AD was celebrated with a monumental arch at the far end of the site, by the southern port. Phaselis was plunged into despair in the following decade when an earthquake struck the city. A second quake hit almost exactly a century later.

From the third century, Phaselis became an increasingly difficult place to live with attacks by pirates and later Arabs heading for Istanbul, as well as clashes between Pagans and Christians. The city also had to contend with swarms of mosquitoes, which plagued its forestry industry. By 1158 AD when the Turks took the region, Phaselis was little more than a village, even though it had three ports built to protect ships from the southwest and northeast winds.

© Samantha Lafferty

Roman aquaduct at Phaselis

ROMANTIC ROMAN RUINS: If you arrive at Phaselis by road, the route is lined on both sides by sarcophagi and tomb covers. The entrance to the site has more mausoleums and tombs, many of which have lost their lids. There are the remains of an aqueduct, broken in half and surrounded by a tangle of weeds and wildflowers, through which you can walk to the military port and the great port. Follow the route along the main street with the bath, gymnasium and agora to the right. The city square is to the left and behind it is a Roman theater, partly shaded from the unrelenting sun by trees.

Farther along the coast, the once quiet fishing village of **Kemer** has been totally overpowered by package tourists from Britain and Russia. Ugly hotel blocks, which do little to blend into the mountains, stretch from the marina along the beach out to Göynuk and Beldibi. It is best to base yourself outside of Kemer and travel to the town to pick up one of the boat trips that sail around the sea caves and coves.

ANTALYA

The expansive Gulf of Antalya stretches from Kaş in the east to Alanya in the west. Sun-drenched coves with fashionable beach clubs and azure waters are set against the formidable bulk of the Taurus Mountains. These combine to make this the heart of the Turkish Riviera.

Antalya is so much more than coastline and après beach cocktails. Venture inland to experience the region's beatific charm. Clusters of

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Boats in Antalya's Harbor

squat, whitewashed houses sit next to tumbledown shops with glass-fronted cupboards crammed with bread.

Like its coastal neighbors, historical wonders abound. The oldest human remains were uncovered at the Karain Cave. Alexander the Great suffered his lone defeat at Termessos on the austere peak of the Taurus Mountains. In downtown Antalya, the archaeological museum is one of the best in the country.

And adventure is never far away. Horse safaris and trekkers cross orchid-filled meadows with Roman and Byzantine ramparts. Locals say it is possible to ski on the higher ridges even when the sun is blazing on the beach.

HISTORY

Hittite tribes have tromped across the harsh Pamphylian plain since Prehistoric times. Remains uncovered in the Karain Cave offer proof of a settlement here since the dawn of humanity. When the Hittites went in search of a more hospitable terrain, the region became a series of independent city-states, until the Persians rode in. Alexander the Great expunged them.

In 159 BC, Pergamon King Attalos II arrived to capitalize on the chaos that ensued following Alexander's death. Attalos called his newly claimed city Attaleia. The city later passed into Roman hands along with the rest of Pergamon. In 130 AD, a visit by Emperor Hadrian was marked with the building of the triple-arched Hadrian's Gate.

Attaleia continued to be an important commercial and military port as it passed back and forth from the Byzantines to the Seljuks. The Crusaders used the harbor during their deadly mission to Palestine. Modern Antalya was built over the top of old Attaleia, erasing much of its ancient past.

Antalya sits in the middle of two long, sandy beaches: Lara to the east and Konyaalti to the west. The old quarter of Kaleiçi with its harbor is in the center of the city. The busy main thoroughfare of Cumhuriyet Caddesi turns into Konyaalti Bulvari as it winds down to Konyaalti Beach. In the opposite direction, Atatürk Caddesi morphs into Isiklar Caddesi, a wide palm-tree lined boulevard packed with cafés and stores. Continuing south along this road, Lara Caddesi leads to the beach.

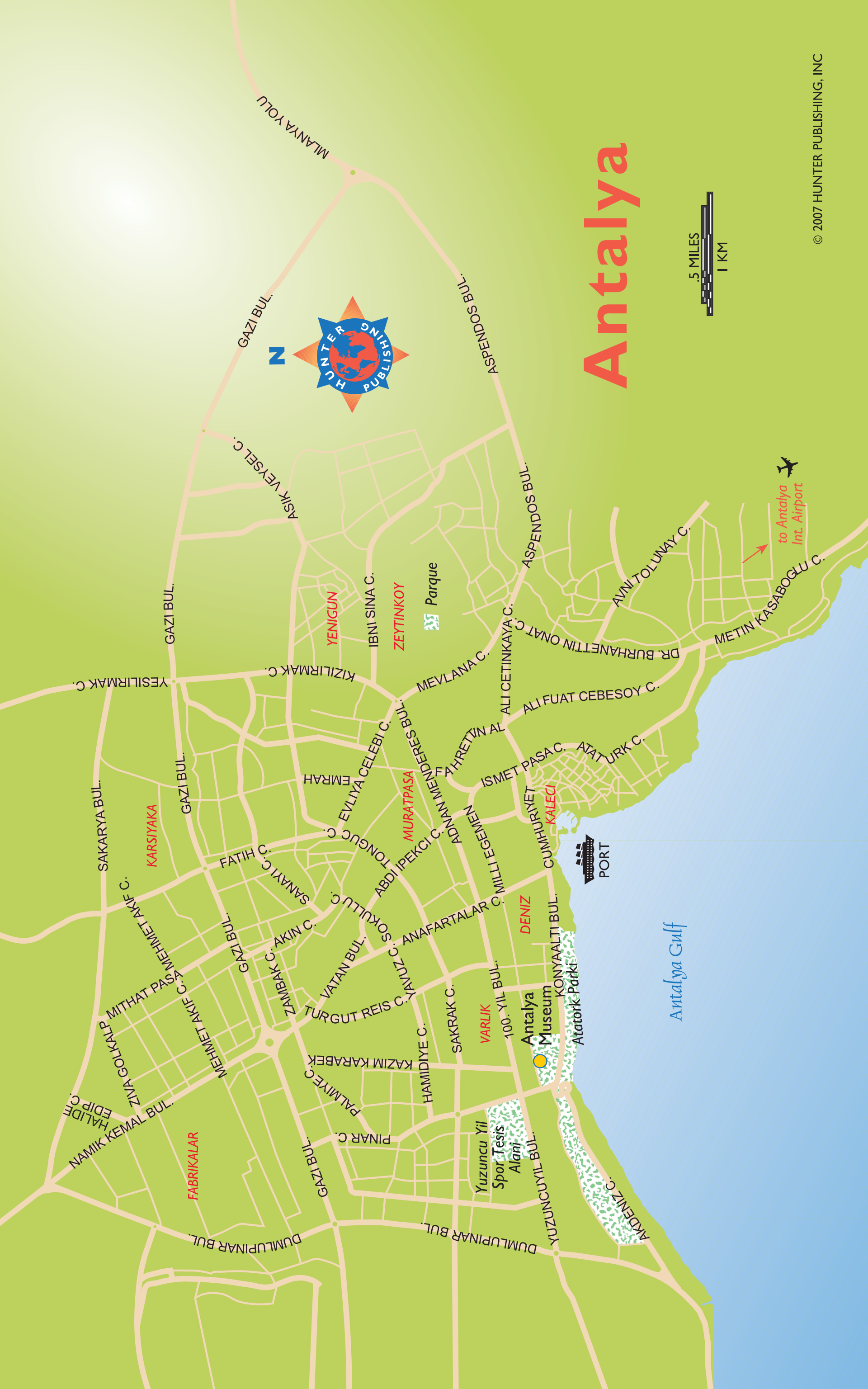
KONYAALTI

The three-km/1.8-mile-long pebbly Konyaalti Beach arcs around the far reaches of downtown Antalya. Stylish beach bars intertwine with a funfair, aqua-park, tennis courts, watersports and beach volleyball courts. Known as the Beach Park, it has something for all tastes. Antalya's population has spiraled to 600,000 and this doubles in the high season, making the beach constantly crowded. At night, the beachfront becomes a neon blaze of pricey bars open until dawn.

ARKEOLOJI MUZESI (ARCHEOLOGY MUSEUM) ✮

The museum (Kenan Evren Bulvari, Konyaalti, ☎ 0242-2414528; open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-5:30pm; entrance fee; no large bags allowed) is a 20-minute walk or a short tram ride from Kaleiçi (see below). It is worth spending an afternoon visiting the 14 exhibition halls in this expansive museum.

Start your tour of the museum on the right side, where there is a section for children with a model Anatolian village. The display has a quilt maker and shoeshiner complete with his gold foot stand and brushes. Curiously, the village also has a man smoking a traditional water pipe. There is also a display of antique toys.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The prehistoric and natural history section has relics found at Karain Cave, including teeth and skulls from Palaeolithic and Neanderthal humans, and spearheads from the Bronze Age. The ceramic exhibition has jugs and bowls from the Archaic period through to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. There are also finds from the ancient cities at Patara, Xanthos and Phaselis, including pottery and a comprehensive display of coins and jewelry.

> ***The word ceramic comes from the Greek word keramos, meaning "horn." Keramoi was used to describe a jug used for drinking wine and later became a general label for any drinking cup made from fired clay earthenware.***

THE EMPEROR'S HALL: The most dramatic section of the museum is the Emperor's Hall, with its Roman marble statues set against terracotta walls. The statues of Hadrian, the Young Faustina and Apollo date from the second century. Apollo, the son of Zeus and Leto, was the God of Sunlight and known equally for his sharp arrow shooting as for his musical and artistic abilities.

The **Hall of Sarcophagi** has an impressive collection of marble tombs mainly from Perge. Note the Sarcophagus of the Garlands (second century) near the entrance to the hall. It was found during an illicit excavation in 1985-1986 and smuggled to the US, where it was displayed in the Brooklyn Museum. It was returned to Turkey in 1994 after a five-year legal battle. The Sarcophagus of Aurelia Botaine Demetriae (second century) almost suffered the same fate. It was taken by smugglers from the necropolis at Perge but was rescued by security

Shady street, Antalya

© Samantha Lafferty

forces before it was shipped abroad. The Ethnography Hall at the far end of the museum has displays of traditional Anatolian crafts, musical instruments and calligraphy.

KALEIÇI ✭✭

Kaleiçi stretches out from the harbor to the modern shopping streets of Cumhuriyet Caddesi and Atatürk Caddesi. Houses painted blue, terracotta and green jostle for prominence along a confusing web of streets that are almost impossible to navigate. You can happily lose yourself for hours among the cafés and handicraft shops. Many of the timber houses now serve as boutique hotels, while others are groaning into dilapidation.

At the edge of Kaleiçi, on Cumhuriyet Caddesi, is the Atatürk Heykeli. The statue of Turkey's founding father offers the best vantage point across the old walled city. Nearby, the **Yivli Minare** (Fluted Minaret) has become the symbol of Antalya. It is the city's oldest Seljuk monument dating from the reign of Sultan Alâeddin Keykubat. The **Eski Camii** next door has an enormous olive tree over the tomb of a shrewd muezzin. Many pilgrims write their wishes on pieces of paper or tie strips of cloth to the tree in the vain hope these will be granted. To the left is the **Saat Kulesi** (Clock Tower), in Kalekapisi, part of the city's fortified walls. Close by, the restored **Karatay Medrese**, a theology school, with its imposing entrance, was built by a Seljuk prince in 1250.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Yivli Minare

From here, walk down to the harbor where a scant few fishermen ready their nets while others ferociously bait tourists on to their boats for tours of the nearby caves and waterfalls. The harbor wall is a popular hangout for young Turkish men, making it slightly uncomfortable for lone women.

Follow the steep steps back to the top of the cliff and turn right along the lane to the orange-stone Hidirlik Kulesi, which stands somberly overlooking the entrance to **Karaalioğlu Parki**. This second-century Roman tower was used as a lighthouse before the Seljuks adapted it for defense.

In the middle of the old city is the **Suna & Inan Kirac Kaleiçi Museum** (Kocatepe Sokak, ☎ 0242-2434274, www.kaleicimuseum.org; open Thursday-Tuesday 9am-noon, 1pm-7:30pm in summer; closes at 6pm in winter). It has an unusual collection of historical artifacts and ceramics from Kütahya and Cannakale in a beautifully restored Ottoman house.

On the outer reaches of Kaleiçi are the decorative arches of Hadrian's Gate, which formed the only entrance into the city. Stairs at the side of the gate lead to a locked door. The view from the top of the stairs is obscured and not as inspiring as the one from in front of the arches.

The buoy in the sea near the rocks at Kaleiçi as you look from Hidirlik Kulesi was the scene of a destructive strike by the British army against a German war ship smuggling guns during the Second World War. The ship lies more than 30 m/100 feet below the surface and attracts experienced divers.

LARA BEACH

Pass through the elegant arches of Hadrian's Gate on to Atatürk Caddesi and turn right for the **Atatürk Museum** (open 8:30am-5pm, closed Monday; free). The house, which Atatürk visited between 1930 and 1935, has a collection of evocative photographs and some of his personal belongings ranging from a gramophone to his pajamas.

Farther along the same road, past rows of shops, restaurants and bars, is a strip of mass-market hotels. Many overhang the cliffs above Lara Beach (10 km/six miles to the east of the city center). Just before you get to the beach are the Lower Düden Falls, which crash down the rocks into the sea. They are best seen from a boat.

CHILDREN'S ANTALYA

Antalya is a kingdom of fun for children. **Konyaalti Beach** (www.beachpark.com.tr) has a host of well-priced activities for young children and teenagers. **AquaLand** is the city's largest water park. **DolphinLand** has daily shows ($15), and for $60 you can swim with the dolphins.

Minicity (☎ 0242-2294545, open daily 9am-11pm) is a park with incredible miniatures of prominent Turkish mosques and palaces.

EXCURSIONS FROM ANTALYA

Antalya is a great base for exploring the many ancient cities along the coast, as well as the national parks inland. **Upper Düden Waterfalls** (Düden Şelalesi), 14 km/nine miles northeast of the city, makes an attractive picnic spot. The falls at **Kursunlu** (28 km/18 miles east of Antalya) is a popular stop for travelers on their way to Perge.

Head inland 20 km/12.5 miles north of Antalya, along E-87 to **Termessos** (open daily 8am-7pm; entrance fee), a city built on such an inhospitable precipice that even Alexander the Great could not conquer it. The two-km/1.2-mile trek from the road along a steep mountain path gives contemporary travelers a flavor of what Alexander must have faced when he came to the Pisidian city. Termessos sits on a natural plateau, flanked by two 1,000-m/3,300-foot mountains.

The city had its heyday in the third and second centuries BC, and many of the ruins date from that time. The great earthquake of 527 AD devastated the coast and folded many of the buildings within Termessos. The view from the great theater, whose stage building is just a step away from plunging down the mountain, is worth the difficult ascent. Hikers will revel in the trails through the **Güllükdaği Termessos Milli Parki**, a national park that surrounds the site.

About 30 km/19 miles northwest of Antalya (along the Route 650 to Burdur) on the eastern slope of Mount Katran is the prehistoric cave of **Karain Magara**. Karain has a series of chambers with stalactites and stalagmites. The caverns were inhabited for approximately 20,000 years and used as a refuge and a cemetery. Discoveries from the cave are on display at museums in Antalya and Ankara.

Another spectacular national park is **Köprülü Kanyon Milli Parki** (beyond Aspendos), where rapids from Köprülü Çayi cut through a deep canyon. The tarred road ends at Beskonak, which is the starting point for white-water rafting on the river (see page 390). Only those with a serious off-road vehicle should continue along the treacherous pathway that climbs to the ruins at Selge (open access). Very little remains of the theater or temples dedicated to Zeus and Artemis. The journey through the rock formations that have been twisted by the wind to resemble those at Cappadocia is more interesting than the ruins.

PERGE

When Alexander the Great left Phaselis he sent part of his army through the mountains to Perge, while he pursued a more difficult sea route. He anticipated a thorny reception, but was greeted warmly by the city, mainly because it did not have strong enough defenses to withstand an onslaught. The red-stone gate towers that can be seen today were built under the rule of the Syrian King Antiochos III (223 to 187 BC).

In 190 BC, the Pamphylians joined the army of Antiochos in the Battle of Magnesia against the Romans. Following their defeat, the region was left to Pergamon, a Roman ally, before being turned over to the Romans themselves. Like other cities in the region, Perge's greatest advancement came during this period. The Romans were masters of construction and understood the threat of earthquakes better than their Hellenistic predecessors. They built colonnaded streets, baths, nymphaeums and agoras from marble filled with lead.

Perge owed its prosperity to the well-irrigated plain that meant the city could grow olives, cotton, citrus fruit and vineyards. Behind the gate towers are channels to take water through the city from the hill behind it. Perge was also located on an ancient trading route.

During the fifth and sixth centuries AD, Perge enjoyed its final period of affluence when it became the seat of a bishop. The Christian influence led to the extension of the city walls and the construction of churches within the city. The first Christian association with Perge came around 43 AD during Roman times, when **St. Paul** came from Cyprus to Perge to preach, with little impact, before heading to Attaleia (Antalya).

The reason behind the demise of Perge is still uncertain. Seljuk attacks from the 12th century onward led residents to flee the city, though nomadic Turks used it as a winter residence for many centuries afterwards. Perge may have finally crumbled under an earthquake in the mid-18th century.

To reach Perge by car, take Route 400 20 km/12 miles east of Antalya. A regular *dolmus* service leaves the small *otogar* near Meydan in

Opposite: Ancient site of Perge (© Styve/Dreamstime)

Antalya and takes about 30 minutes to reach Aksu, where you will be dropped on the side of the highway. You will have to take a taxi from Aksu village or walk the two km/1.2 miles to the ruins. It is a pleasant walk and there are a couple of cafés selling drinks and *gözleme*, Turkish pancakes, along the way.

EXPLORING THE RUINS

The ruins at Perge (open daily 9am-7:30pm in summer; closes at 6pm in winter; separate entrance and parking fee) are not as impressive as those at Ephesus or Pergamon, nor do they have the bewitching views that grace Assos. But Perge has endured invasion and nature to tell a remarkable tale of a typical Roman city.

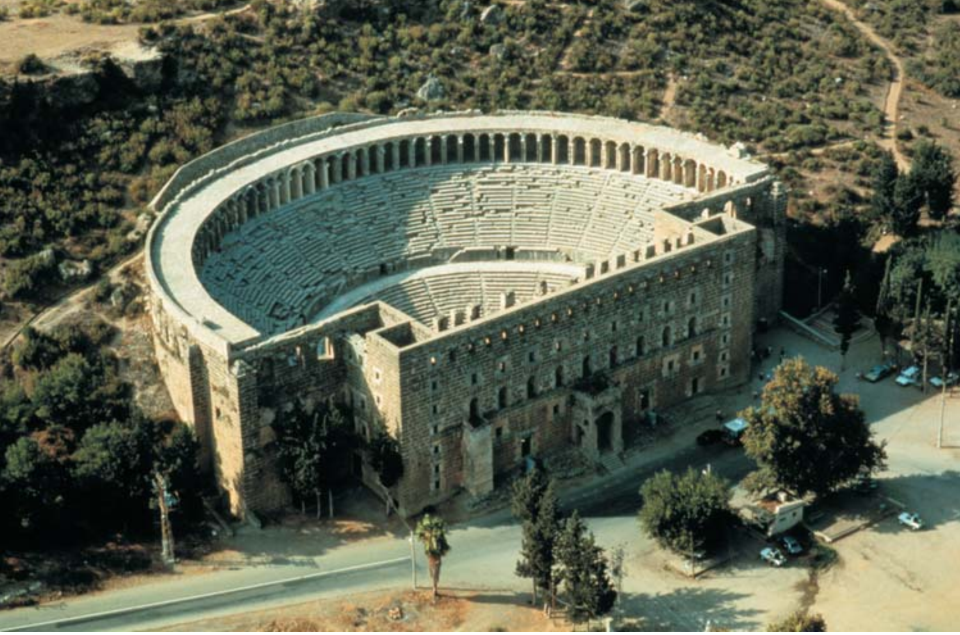
A walk among the ruins shows that city inhabitants watched plays at the theater and games at the stadium. They exercised at the gymnasium and visited the baths before strolling to the agora down one of the marble streets adorned with statues. They lived a prosperous cultural and social life in an attractive city. Most of the statues are now housed in the Antalya Archaeology Museum.

The **theater**, which is being restored, held 14,000 people. Ambassadors, lawyers and senators were seated in the front row, warriors in the second row, and women sat in the upper rows. On the opposite side of the road is the second-century stadium where gladiator contests were held. Once wild beast contests began in the third century, the north end of the stadium, where the majority of the seating is, was fenced off to protect spectators.

From the stadium, pass through the arches, which were used as shops, and cross the car park to main entrance to the city. The entrance is marked by a Hellenistic gate, now consisting of two crumbling towers. Inside, along the broad avenues, are an agora, houses and baths. The acropolis is located at the far end of the city on a wide hilltop. It served as the last defense for Perge.

ASPENDOS ✯✯✯

About 45km from Antalya lies one of the most remarkable **Roman theaters** in the world (open 8am-7pm in summer; 8:30am-5pm in winter; entrance fee). Built from heavy grey stone and biscuit-colored limestone during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161 to 180 AD), the theater is almost perfect.



The magnificent Aspendos arena (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

The grand arena has 15,000 seats topped by a row of columned arches that curve around to touch the stage building. It is unusual for a theater to be totally enclosed in this way. The stage building was highly decorative with statues in the niches. Five doors allowed the orchestra and actors to enter. During gladiatorial combat, the smaller doors would have been used to let in the wild animals.

> ***The city's inhabitants enjoyed the plays for free, which were paid for by high-ranking officials to win popularity. Theater tickets were usually made of bone or metal and would sometimes be in the shape of a bird or a fish.***

Romans preferred bawdry entertainment with coarse language and satire aimed at their Greek predecessors. They used Greek masks to mock them. Gladiator and wild beast contests were the most popular forms of entertainment. In addition to the amphitheater, there are the ruins of an agora, acropolis, nymphaeum and a wonderfully preserved Roman aqueduct.

HISTORY

The location for Aspendos was chosen because it lay where the Koprucay River reached the plains. The river played an important role in the economic and social life of the city. It protected the city's fleet of ships and made for easy transportation to the city. It also irrigated the fields. There is a photogenic Seljuk bridge across the river.

Like Perge, Aspendos became rich on the land. Its pastures were used to breed horses, and it also had salt beds, olive groves and vineyards. The city had an important trading network with nearby Attaleia and straddled one of the ancient world's most important trade routes. Among the city's exports were carpets and other textiles, as well as furniture and ornaments made with wood from lemon trees.

In the 13th century, Aspendos was the seat of a powerful group of Seljuk Turks. Sultan Alâeddin Keykubad enclosed the theater with a tiled roof and used it as a palace. It came under Ottoman control during the 15th century and was abandoned in the 18th century.

In summer, classical music concerts, opera and ballet performances are held in the theater at Aspendos. With its perfect acoustics and floodlit theater, the concerts are incredibly atmospheric.

> **TIP:** *Tickets, which include bus transfer, can be bought from the Tourist Information Office in Antalya. This is about a third cheaper than buying a ticket from a tour agent.*

© Jan McGready

SIDE

The road between Antalya and Side has a string of enormous hotels that have merged to form small resorts popular with Dutch and German tourists. One such resort is **Belek**. Once a small village, Belek has been engulfed by all-inclusive hotels catering to golfers. The town has a garish shopping center that looks hideously out of place against the surrounding farmland.

Farther east (65 km/40 miles from Antalya) is Side, a Greco-Roman town with columns, friezes and statues scattered across its fields and along the highway. The ruins sit uncomfortably in this busy resort and it is sad that so many people walk disinterested past thousands of years of history.

Side was established in the seventh century BC as a trade colony of the Aegean city Kyme near Izmir. Side passed through the same hands as its coastal neighbors. It had its wealthiest period as a Pamphylian city when it was prominent in the slave trade, and most of its relics date from this period.

THE MARBLE THEATER

The most spectacular ruin, the second-century amphitheater, looks like a fan spread out in the center of the town. The Roman amphitheater (open everyday 8am-7pm; entrance fee) was erected on an incredible scale on the site of a smaller Hellenistic theater. It had to be built on high vaults because Side lacked a hill to support the structure.

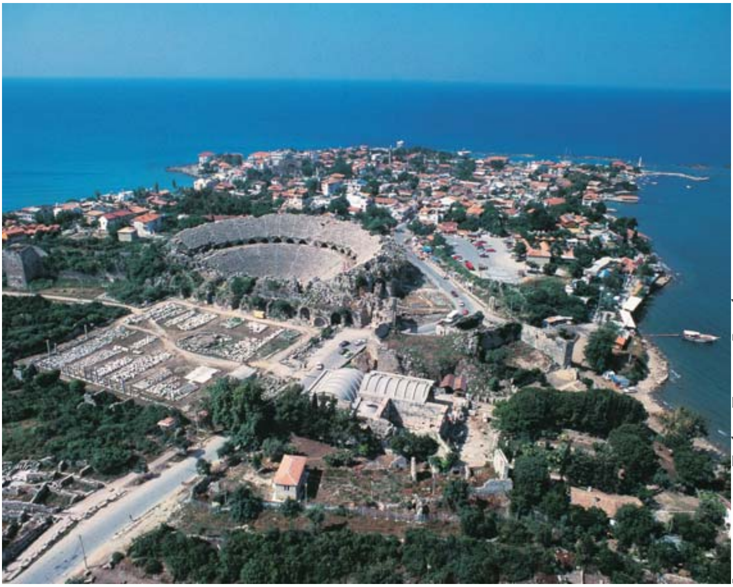


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The marble theater sits in the center of Side

The 15,000-strong audience would enter the theater from the colonnaded street. The façade was covered with marble statues and friezes, many of which now lie within the orchestra pit. Under the Romans, the theater held bouts between gladiators and wild animals. The Byzantines used it for the all-together more gentle purpose of Christian preaching. Next to the theater are an agora, a Byzantine basilica and the foundations of a palace strewn across a weed-filled field that leads down to the beach.

Opposite the theater, a **Roman bathhouse** has been restored and filled with sarcophagi and statues collected from the ancient city (Side Muzesi, open daily 9am-7:15pm; entrance fee). Ahead, the arches of an ancient gateway span the road, leading into modern Side with its beaches and restaurants. As the sun drops, make for the headland where the twin temples of Apollo and Athena stand over the dusky sea.

When Side is flooded with tourists, take a *dolmus* or a boat from the harbor to the nearby farming town of **Manavgat**, where a broad waterfall flows through pea-green fields. Sit at one of the cafés on the overhanging wooden terraces and listen to the gushing river. There is a weekly food and handicraft market in the town.

© Samantha Lafferty

Manavgat Waterfall

The Taurus Mountains extend in an arc from Lake Egridir in the west to the upper reaches of the Euphrates River in the east. Aladag and Mount Erciyes are the highest peaks. Lakes hidden within the plateaus and forests of pine, cedar, oak, and juniper are scattered across the range.

ALANYA

Alanya (138 km/86 miles east of Antalya) has been dubbed Kücük Almanya, or Little Germany. An influx of tourists from Germany drawn to its 70 km/43-mile coastline has transformed Alanya from a sleepy fishing town surrounded by banana plantations and orange groves to one of the country's most popular destinations. Development has been kind, and the city has a well-heeled ambience with upscale restaurants and hotels along the harbor.

Alanya became a township during the Trojan War when several tribes fled into Anatolia. It was known as Beautiful Mountain during the Byzantine period and had its halcyon days during medieval times. A red-stone Seljuk fortress sits on a steep promontory behind the harbor. The most interesting sights are on the highest reaches. A grueling hour-long climb from the harbor reveals a hidden quarter known as **Ehmedek**, where 2,500-year-old ruins dot the landscape. A lane leads to a restored caravansary with a cavernous cistern. All along the lane, citrus and fig trees hang over the gardens of slightly dilapidated houses. The thick scent of jasmine clings to the air.

Panoramic view of Alanya from the west side of the citadel (© Patrickneil)

Higher still, a path leads to the summit of the fortress (entrance fee) with a crumbling Byzantine church, a Seljuk palace and several cisterns. You can perch on the rutted walls of the fortress with the cliffs below and take in divine views of the rasping sea. Spare a thought for the prisoners condemned to death who would be hurled over the edge.

PIRATES CAVES & SELJUK TOWERS

In the harbor below the citadel is an octagonal red brick tower known as the Kizil Kule (Red Tower). The five-storey tower was built in 1227 and now houses an exhibition of local arts and culture (open daily 10am-8pm; entrance fee). Farther along the harbor are the open arches of the dockyard (Tersane). Seljuk Sultan Alâeddin Keykubat used the city as a winter residence and the Tersane dates from that era. It was among the most advanced in the world at that time. Next to it is the Tophane Kule (Arsenal Tower), used as a canon foundry by the Ottomans.

The towers are best seen from the water on one of the boats that leave the harbor for a tour of the caves below the citadel. Pirates used these

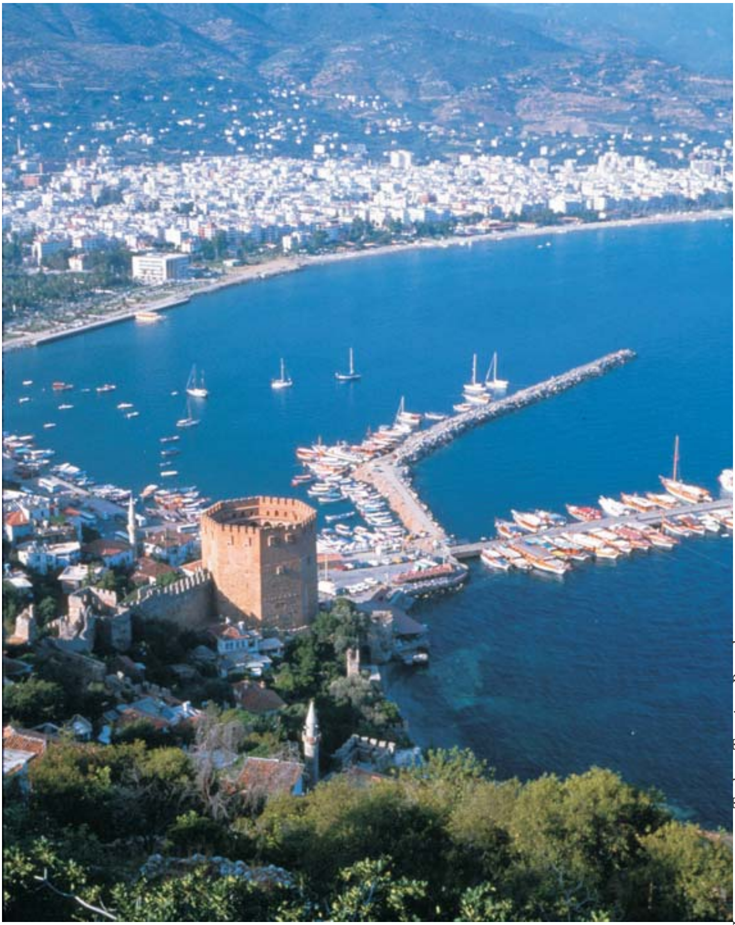


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Kizil Kule

caves to hide their boats and their ill-gotten gains. Phosphorus Cave earned its name from its blue and green shimmering rocks. Close by is the Cleopatra Pool, so called because she would descend steep steps from the citadel to bathe in the frothy seawater after Mark Antony gave the land to her as a wedding gift.

On the opposite side of the citadel behind the Tourist Information Office is the **Damlatas Mağarasi** (open daily 10am-7pm; entrance fee), a cave believed to be as much as 20,000 years old. The honey-colored stalagmites and stalactites inside are on a surreal scale, rising and falling from the rocks to almost touch. The high humidity in the cave, which is known to alleviate asthma, causes water to drip from the rocks, giving rise to the name the Weeping Cave.

Atatürk Caddesi, an avenue fringed with palm trees, is the main street with restaurants and the Alanya Market with its souvenir shops and textiles. There is a small **archaeology museum** (open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm) south of Atatürk Caddesi. Havulzlu Park offers some shade and relaxation away from the busy cafés and bars along Rihtim Caddesi and Limon Meydani.

EXCURSIONS FROM ALANYA

Alarahan (west of Alanya along Route 400, signposted on right) is an atmospheric Seljuk caravansary on the banks of the Alara Çayi (Alara River). Above the inn, Alara Castle sits along a perilous ridge.

Eleven km/seven miles east of Alanya is **Dim Çayi**, a river flowing through a shady valley. There is little to do here except lie on the Ottoman seating in one of the many floating fish restaurants. For the more energetic traveler, a steep path leads up the mountain to **Dim Mağarasi**, a 232-m/760-foot high cave brimming with stalagmites and stalactites.

CASTLES ALONG THE COAST

The coastline between Alanya and Mersin along the inhospitable Taurus Mountains is littered with Byzantine and Seljuk ruins. A precipitous road between Anamur and Silifke, with its endless curves and bends, is studded with castles and mud-brick houses that cling inscrutably to the cliffs. The journey along this coast is staggering in its beauty and made even better by the lack of other travelers.

Anemurium

Traveling east of Alanya through the plains past Gazipasa, the road begins to climb as it reaches Anamur (135 km/84 miles), the southernmost town on this stretch of coast. The ghostly ruins of **Anemurium** (open daily 8am-8pm; entrance fee) lie across a hillside above a narrow strip of beach six km/four miles west of the town. Founded by the Hittites, Anemurium was a great trading center under the Romans until it was hit by the twin problems of an earthquake and Arab attacks. The devastation deterred new settlers and so its churches, theater and necropolis have remained forsaken.

Mamure Kalesi (seven km/four miles east of Anamur; open daily 9am-5:30pm; entrance fee) is a dreamy medieval castle that has yielded part of its walls to the sea. The first fortress was built on this site in the third century AD and was used variously as a pirates' lair and an Armenian palace. The existing castle was built in 1226 by the Seljuk Sultan Alâeddin Keykubat, and was seized by the Ottomans in 1469. The end of World War I meant the demise of the Ottomans and the abandonment of the castle.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The East Mediterranean coast is littered with castles

More castles guard the islets along the coast between Anamur and the town of **Tasucu**, where car ferries depart daily for Girne in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Tasucu is a busy port town with plenty of hotels. Just beyond the town at Ayatekla (left of the highway) is a ruined Byzantine basilica next to the **Cave of St. Thecla**, one of St. Paul's first converts. Thecla was persecuted for her beliefs and took refuge in the cave. The Byzantines revered her and built the church in her honor.

SILIFKE

Ancient **Seleucia ad Calycadnum** was one of nine cities founded by Seleucos Nicator in the third century BC after he gained control of Syria on the death of Alexander the Great. A vast Byzantine castle towers above the town (four km/2.5 miles inland from town, off the Konya road; open daily 8:30am-5pm; entrance fee) and offers a mesmerizing view of the Roman necropolis and aqueduct below.

The few other interesting ruins in town include the lone column of the **Temple of Zeus** dating from the second or third century AD and the ancient stone cistern, **Tekir Ambari**.

DETOUR TO MUT

Make a detour north of Silifke along highway 715 to the town of Mut (75 km/47 miles). The trip crosses spectacular mountain scenery, following the gorge of Göksu River. The river was the site of Emperor Barbarossa's death during the Third Crusade. Mut is dug deep into a valley and has a 14th-century fortress on its fringe. The real reason for the journey lies 21 km/13 miles farther north.

The **Alahan monastery** is a lonely Byzantine complex hidden in the Taurus Mountains. Monk cells cut into sharp rocks make up the earliest parts of the monastery. Early Christians used the cells to escape oppression. Three churches were built later: the **Cave Church**, the partially wrecked fifth-century **West Church** and the domed basilica of the **East Church**. The Taurus Mountains are at their wildest and most beautiful here.

THE THREE GRACES

On the coast east of Silifke, cross the marshy Göksu Delta, a nature reserve and breeding ground for ducks, roosters and reed nightingales, to the village of **Narlikuyu**, which translates beautifully as "Pomegranate Well." In the village square are the remains of a Roman bath known as the Baths of the Maidens because of its mosaic floor depicting the Three Graces. The fountain was reputed to gift its bathers with beauty, intelligence and a long life. What more could they have wished for?

THE CAVES OF HEAVEN & HELL

From Narlikuyu a road leads five km/three miles inland to two dilapidated caves mysteriously named Heaven and Hell (Cennet ve Cehennem). A sign points in two directions, demanding visitors make their choice between bliss and misery. In reality, the decision is made for them. Only the larger Heaven (Cennet Deresi) can be explored without climbing equipment.

The entrance to Heaven is at the end of a field littered with uninteresting Byzantine and Roman ruins. The pathway that leads down into the cave becomes progressively difficult. A small church marks the entrance to the cave. Inside, an underground rushing stream feeds the Fountain of Knowledge in Narlikuyu. The cave is far from Eden. Nearby, the gloomy recess of Hell (Cehennem Deresi) is concave and inaccessible. The caves are considered sacred by Christians, pagans and Muslims alike.

KIZ KALESI

About three miles (five km) east of Narlikuyu are twin castles standing opposite each other, one jutting out from a sandy beach and the other on an island across a narrow channel. **Korykos Kalesi**, on the shore, was built in the 12th century by Armenian kings and originally connected to its sister by a causeway. This has since disappeared and the Maiden's Castle, Kiz Kazeli, now stands.

The floating castle derives its name from a legend about a king who built it to protect his daughter after it was predicted she would die of a snakebite. An admirer sent a basket of fruit to her in which a snake had hidden. She was bitten and died.

The sorry tale still strikes fear into locals who refuse to step foot on the island. It is possible to visit the castle if you can find a boat to take you there. Korykos Kalesi is easier to look around, even though the inside is heavily overgrown. The village itself is one of the more attractive places to stay along the eastern coast between Alanya and Adana.

THE ROAD TO MERSIN

Along this stretch of coast, you could spend days tripping over Byzantine and Roman cities, reminders of this region's glorious past. Many of these do not deserve much attention. A temple stands at **Ayas** just three km/two miles from Kiz Kalesi.

Next is **Elaiussa Sebaste**, a second century BC city that is believed to be the route through which the olive first came to Turkey. Elaiussa, which means olive, is now little more than a narrow peninsula where the ruins of a cistern, theater, church and baths can be seen. To the northwest, hundreds of graves are strewn among the lemon groves in the Roman necropolis at **Kanlidivane**.

MERSIN

After the untamed mountains and empty beaches of the Eastern Mediterranean, Mersin is a jolt back into the modern world. A busy port city, Mersin's waterfront has been revamped with restaurants and nightlife. The city is a good place to shop, but there's little reason to hang around, unless you need to catch a ferry to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

More romantic – and at the same time war-ravaged – is **Tarsus**, 25 km/16 miles east of Mersin. The city is squeezed between an industrial mess and flanked by a major highway. Yet it has an old town with an intriguing history stretching back to 3000 BC. Its most seductive era was in 41 BC when, following the Battle of Philippi, Mark Antony became Caesar's heir-apparent. Intent on a Persian invasion, he sent for the Ptolemite Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra. Delighted, she entered Tarsus by sailing up the Cydnus River in a golden barge with outstretched purple sails. She was dressed as Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, and surrounded by servants playing harps and fanning her. Mark Antony was captivated. Instead of rebuking her, he gifted her chunks of the coast.

Tarsus was also the birthplace of Saul, a Jew whose blinding revelation on the road to Damascus converted him to Christianity. A well in the old town, named St. Paul's Well, supposedly stands on the site of his family home. The well simply consists of a hole in the floor and is likely to have been an invention by the Byzantines or Crusaders. There is also a church bearing the apostle's name, although again, it had little to do with St. Paul.

THE CILICIAN GATES

The carving of the Cilician Gates, a narrow mountain pass through the Taurus Mountains linking Anatolia with the Mediterranean Coast, was a masterstroke of ancient engineering. The route follows the gorge of the freezing Cydnus River, which almost killed Alexander the Great when he bathed in it. Merchants have flooded through the pass, whether in an ancient caravan or modern truck, and the town here became wealthy and powerful on the back of this trade. Also here is the less revered **Cleopatra Gate**, dating from Roman times. Meanwhile, parts of the Roman Road can be seen in the bazaar district and on the outskirts of the town.

ADANA

The brash city of Adana sits against the fertile cotton fields of the Çukurova Plain. It is the country's fourth-largest city with a population of two million. A commercial hub full of car dealerships and shopping malls, it attracts more business commuters than leisure travelers.

Adana's history stretches back to the first millennium BC, although all that remains of this illustrious past is the long **Taş Kopru** (Stone Bridge) across the Seyhan River. The bridge was built by Hadrian and restored by Justinian.

© Agencia Brasil

Sabanci Merkez Camii

The city is now dominated by the gleaming white **Sabanci Merkez Camii**, which reflects perfectly in the Seyhan River. Built in 1999 by a Turkish industrialist, the mosque is on a grand scale, complete with six minarets. Inside, elaborate tiles are based on Istanbul's Blue Mosque. Sabanci Merkez Camii dwarfs the graceful 16th-century stone Ulu Camii, which has an unusual octagonal minaret decorated with black stripes.

The covered bazaar, with its stone arches overhanging the textile stalls, is also worth a visit. The **Adana Museum** (Seyhan Caddesi; open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) has some Hittite, Urartian and Seljuk exhibits.

Adana's most famous son is novelist Yasar Kemal, who penned Mehmet My Hawk. *Kemal's works have won critical acclaim and earned him nominations for the Nobel Prize for Literature.*

COTTON & SNAKES

East of Adana, the dreary flats of the Cukurova Plain are dominated by expansive cotton fields. The crops are tended by migrant farm workers whose crude tented villages can be seen across the plains. The E-90 highway that skirts along the far reaches of the plains is choked with trucks heading to Iran. The first place of note is **Incirlik** (after 25 km/16 miles), dominated by its US airbase and often closed off to non-military personnel.

A more rewarding stop-off is **Yilanlikale,** where a magnificent 12th-century castle straddles a mound that rises above the plain. Its name, meaning Castle of the Snakes, probably came from

© Samantha Lafferty

its Armenian builder, a ruler known as the King of the Snakes. Others say the castle earned its ghastly name because it was abandoned after being overrun by snakes. You may not encounter snakes on a walk around the wrecked interior, but the image is unlikely to be far away.

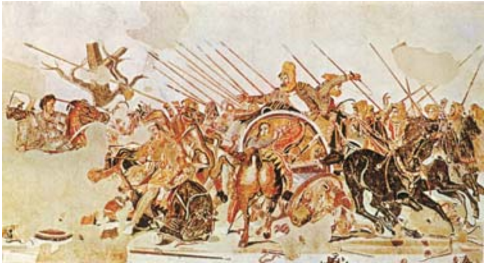
THE HATAY

The E-90 highway swings around Iskenderun Körfezi (Gulf of Iskenderun) before it splits. The right-hand fork becomes the E-91 and drops south into the narrow finger of the Hatay. On the map it looks as if it has been sliced off the side of Syria. Indeed, the region was incorporated into Syria by the French when the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end at the First World War. After the Turkish War of Independence, the French left Cilicia. They gave back the Hatay just before the Second World War to buy Turkish support against the Germans. Many Syrians have still not accepted the transfer. The narrow strip of land has a mixed Turkish and Arab population, creating a melting pot of language and culture. The Christian, Greek and Armenian communities also have left their mark on the region, particularly in its architecture.

> **TIP:** *Try Hatay's culinary specialties, like its orchid drink, called* salep, *and its famous ice-cream milk.*

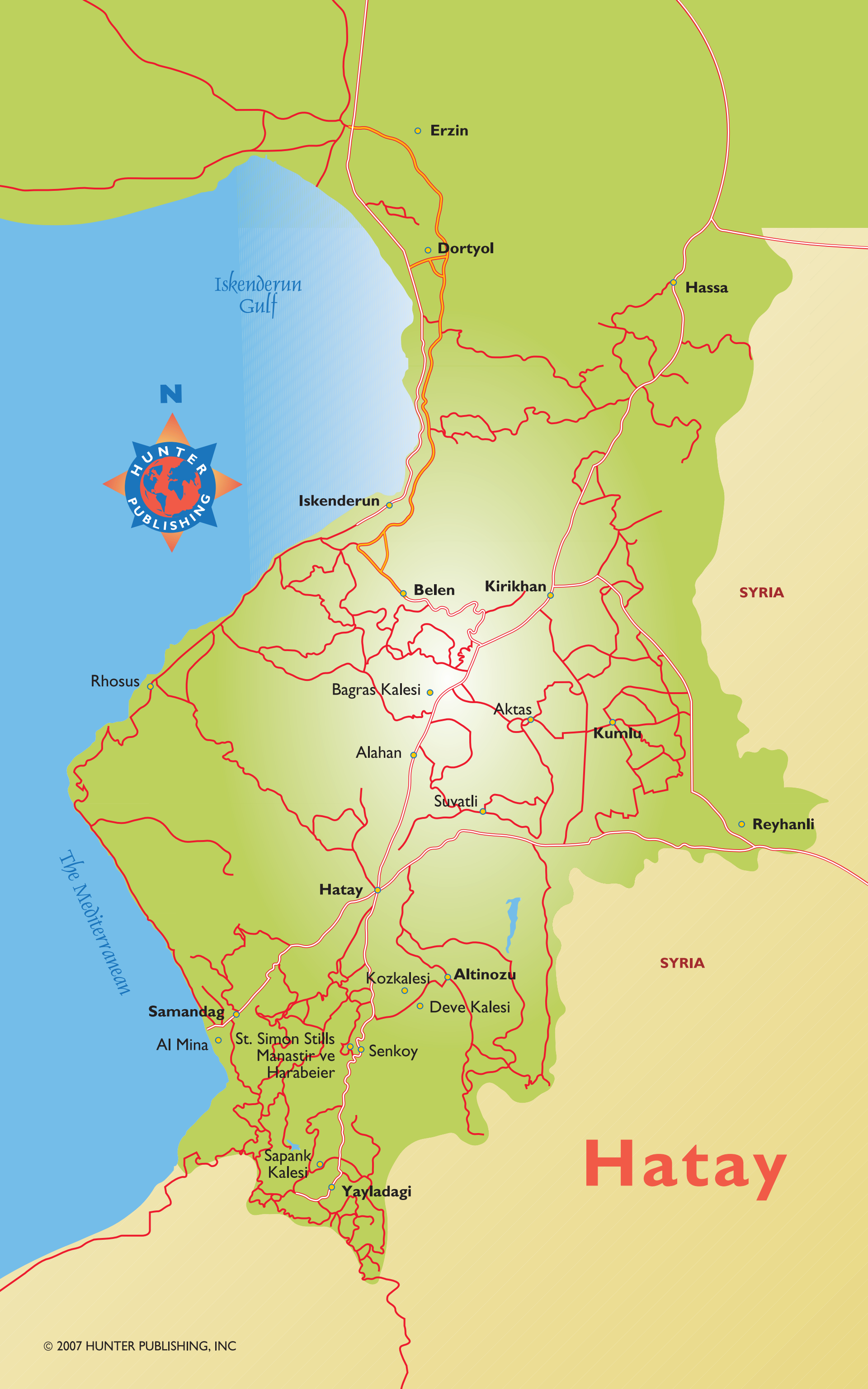
THE BATTLE OF ISSOS

Just around the bend of the gulf is the Issos Plain, the scene of a bloody battle between Alexander the Great and the Persian King Darius. Alexander faced the greater force of Darius' army, killing more than 100,000 of his troops and forcing the Persian leader to flee. In his speedy flight, he left behind his wife, mother and children. Alexander's victory was marked by the naming of the nearby town as Alexandretta (modern Iskenderun).



First-century mosaic depicting Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issos

Iskenderun and its neighbors along the gulf of the same name have strived to be taken seriously as eastern beach resorts.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Samandag
Al Mina
St. Simon Stills
Manastir ve
Harabeier
Senkoy
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Hatay

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Their failure to lure beach lovers comes from the chemical haze that hangs over this stretch of coastline, as giant factories pump out intoxicating smoke. Iskenderun itself has a French influence in its architecture and layout, but it is better known as a Turkish industrial port. Route E-91 from Iskenderun goes through the Belen Pass to Antakya in the heart of the Hatay.

ANTAKYA

Nestled against the Habib Neccar Daği and divided by the ancient Orontes River, Antakya was founded by Alexander the Great's general Seleucus Nicator I in the fourth century BC. St. Peter founded the first Christian community here and preached his first sermons in a nearby cave, giving the town a religious significance and making it a place of pilgrimage. Antakya (ancient Antioch) has long been a place of religious tolerance. Standing by the graceful bell tower in the courtyard of the **Turkish Catholic Church** on Kurtuluş Caddesi, you can see the minaret of **Sermaye Camii**. Behind it on Hurriyet Caddesi are an **Orthodox Church** and a **synagogue**. Also on Kurtuluş Caddesi is **Habib Neccar Camii** (636 AD), the first mosque built in Anatolia. Islam spread from here across the country.

© Samatha Lafferty

Brightly painted door, Antakya

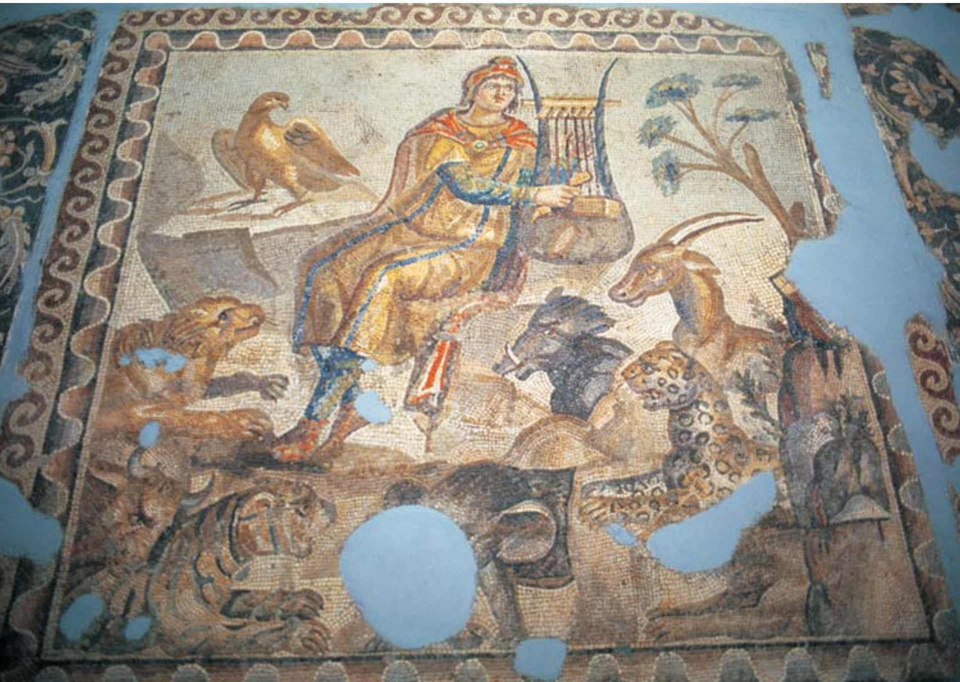
Kurtuluş Caddesi behind the Uzun Çarşi bazaar is the beginning of a maze of lanes with tiny mosques and rudimentary stores selling little more than fresh bread and dusty packets of biscuits. The painted houses have high walls that conceal courtyards where families spend most of their days shaded from the burning sun. The outer walls of the courtyards are decorated with orange, mulberry and plum trees. Often, the courtyards have ancient marble fountains.

Beside the picturesque old quarter with its bazaar, the city has few reminders of its glorious past. Along the banks of the Orontes, Antakya has a Levantine feel with its upscale, shuttered apartments on wide tree-lined boulevards. The Roman stone bridge across the river leads to the town's main attraction, Hatay Arkeoloji Museum.

THE MOSAIC COLLECTION ✭

The **Mosaic Museum** (open Tuesday 1pm-4:30pm; Wednesday-Sunday 8:30am-noon, 1pm-4:30pm) attests to have the finest display of Roman mosaics in the world, a claim that is being contested by a new museum in Gaziantep. The mosaics in the Antakya museum date from the second and third centuries. Many of them formed the floors of private houses in ancient Antioch and in nearby Daphne. They de-

Mosaics of ancient Rome (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)



pict a luxurious and slightly debauched lifestyle with tremendously lifelike scenes of banqueting, dancing and hunting. The most famous mosaic shows a drunken Dionysos spilling wine from a goblet as he staggers along the street.

The **Archaeology Museum** is housed in a tatty white building on the rotary just beyond the Roman Bridge. There is a frustrating lack of information about the collection on offer at the museum, giving precedence to calls for the mosaics to be moved to Istanbul or Ankara. Behind the museum is an attractive park beside the river.

Antakya's second great attraction, **St. Piyer Kilesi**, the world's first church, can be found about two km/1.2 miles from town on the Antakya-Reyhanli road (reached by *dolmus* from the *otogar*). When St. Paul began preaching Christianity, he held his first meeting in this cave. The church façade was added later by the Crusaders. The Vatican has declared it a place of pilgrimage for Christians and an entrance fee is now charged (open Tuesday-Sunday 8am-noon, 1pm-5pm). Farther up the steep mountain road (15 km/nine miles) are the bastion towers of the Koz Kalesi.

DAPHNE (HARBIYE)

At the far end of Harbiye Caddesi (eight km/five miles south of Antakya) are the remains of the Grove of Daphne, known locally as Harbiye. Daphne was a local beauty who was aggressively pursued by Apollo. She was turned into a laurel bush to escape his advances, but even this did not protect her. Apollo weaved a wreath using the leaves of the bush.

The Seleucids built a temple and oracle dedicated to Apollo. The temple was devoted to pleasure, and nymphs were on hand to service the royal family. A thriving ancient summer resort was established around the temple. The luxurious Roman villas were decorated with the mosaics that are now on show in the Archaeological Museum. Daphne's prominence attracted the lovers Antony and Cleopatra, who were married here.

Daphne is now popular with families who flock here for picnics at the weekends. Unfortunately, they have ruined what was once a lavish setting. Food stands are everywhere and trash hangs from the bushes and floats along the stream.

WEST FROM ANTAKYA

Heading west across the Orontes on the Antakya-Samandağ highway, beyond Nahirli village, is the **Monastery of St. Simeon the Stylite**. The eerie complex (open access) consists of the ruins of three churches, 11 cisterns, a baptistery and a kitchen.

ST. SIMEON

After his entry into the priesthood, Simeon went into solitary seclusion. After three years he decided life as a hermit was not a big enough sacrifice. Instead, he chained himself to a pillar and lived there for a staggering 25 years. Word of his faith spread throughout the region and the sick and needy came to seek his help. He failed to gain the isolation he desired, but did earn the rank of stylite for his devotion to healing pilgrims.

From the monastery, head along the coast to the resort of Samandağ for the **Titus Tuneli** (45 km/28 miles from Antakya) rather than the beaches, which are rotten with pollution from Iskenderun. The Titus Tuneli is a deep grotto cut through the rock in a vain attempt to stop the harbor silting up. Roman Emperor Titus completed the tunnel in 81 AD. The area is littered with Roman tombs and the remnants of the harbor walls.

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON WHEELS

DRIVING TOURS

Jeep safaris are becoming increasingly popular in southern Turkey. The jeeps spend most of their time roaring up implausible mountain tracks and speeding down the other side before crashing through streams and fjords. As well as appealing to thrill seekers who enjoy juddering down a mountainside, jeep safaris were designed to get travelers off the beaten track and closer to nature. These days, they tend to be long, loud convoys cutting up mountains and thundering through villages. It is an exhilarating day out, but it does not get high marks for responsible tourism. Expect some bemused looks from villagers.

Adventure Tours (Sultanahmet, Istanbul, ☎ 0212-5208720, www.adventuretours.com.tr) has jeep safaris around Marmaris and Antalya. Tours cost $70 and include a tour guide and lunch. The Marmaris jeep safari leaves Içmeler, outside Marmaris, and takes a dirt road through a forest into the region's highest mountain, Palamut (880 m/2,890 feet) above Turunç Bay. From here, it drops down to Çiftlik Beach on the eastern edge of the Bozburun Peninsula for a swimming break before traveling south to Bayir village. The safari heads northwest across the peninsula to the waterfalls at Turgut and then off-road through the wilds of the Aspiran Forest. The agency also has two tours around Antalya. The first follows back roads through forests and up into the rugged Taurus Mountains. The second trip explores nearby Köprülü Canyon National Park.

Equinox Travel (☎ 0242-2478836, www.equinox.com.tr) has multi-day self-drive jeep safaris along rough and sometimes difficult, rocky roads. A guide jeep leads the group. There are three routes: the Western Mediterranean around Marmaris and Fethiye; the Antalya region and Lake District; and the Eastern Mediterranean Bolkar and Aladağlar mountain ranges. If you are looking for more thrills and have experience of riding dirt bikes, you can join two-wheel safaris along the same routes. These are best in the spring and fall when the rivers are full and the paths are muddy. You will need to bring your own clothing, as only helmets are provided. The eight-day tour costs $500, including accommodation in village houses and meals, bike or jeep hire, a guide and a mechanic. Gas is extra.

Dalyan-based **Kaunos Tours** has a full-day, 120-km/75-mile safari around Eskikoy and Ortaca. Most of the route is along mountainous dirt roads and through a forest. The safari stops in a couple of mountain villages, at a deserted beach for swimming, and at Yuvarlak Çayi where there is an impressive canyon. The safari costs $47, including a driver and insurance. Contact Kaunos Tours (Maras Caddesi, Dalyan, ☎ 0252-2842816, www.kaunostours.com).

WARNING: Adventure tour operators set up kiosks on every street corner in the resorts along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts. They can be a good source of cheap trips. If you plan to do something wild, like jump off a mountain on a tandem paraglide, then be very selective. Check out the credentials of the instructors and ask around about the company's reputation.

CYCLING TOURS

Kaunos Tours (see above) has a weekly cycling tour (five days of cycling) around **Dalyan Creek**. The tour begins with a relatively easy 30 km/19 miles ride with the highlight being the unspoilt Iztuzu Beach, a nesting ground for endangered Caretta Caretta turtles. The second day is a more arduous 55 km/34 miles through forests full of frankincense and orange trees. On day three, the tour sails down the river in Dalyan to the thermal springs at Sultaniye. Afterwards, there is a bike ride to Dalyan's mud baths and the ancient city of Kaunos. Day four starts with a jeep ride 900 m/3,000 feet up Olmez mountain for a stunning view of Dalyan's lake and delta and out to the Greek island of Rhodes. From here, there is a 35-km/22-mile descent through forests and fields to the coastal village of Ekincik. The final day is a hard 50 km/31 miles over the mountains. The ride starts at Bozburun Hill overlooking Dalyan, before it drops to the remote bay of Asi Koyu with its idyllic beach. The journey back is particularly mountainous. Kanuos uses 21-speed mountain bikes and professional cycling guides. The weekly tour costs $700, including accommodation, meals and support vehicle. You can also join daily bike tours.

© Radomil

Tombs of Dalyan

©Alternatif Turizm

Alternatif Turizm (☎ 0252-4172720, www.alternatifoutdoor.com) has a 25-km/16-km ride along dirt tracks and irrigation channels following Yuvarlak Çayi, a gushing river in the mountains above **Dalyan**. The trek kicks off with an uphill climb through the unique Liquid Amber forests (a kind of sycamore tree not found anywhere else) before the big descent in the afternoon.

> **TIP:** *If you want to do this trek independently, take the road from Dalyan towards Mugla and follow the signposts for Yuvarlak Çayi.*

Bougainville (☎ 0242-8363737, www.bougainville-turkey.com) has daily and weekly biking tours on high-spec Trek mountain bikes. It also has bikes available for private hire. The 30-km/19-mile daily tour follows seldom-used roads and paths around **Kaş Peninsula**. It begins with a short, difficult climb up a rough mountain road. One side of the path has a sheer drop, giving striking views across woodland out to the coast. Once over the peak, there is an incredible descent down **mountain** switchbacks with only the occasional goat herder for company. The dirt road is nobbled with small rocks and the wind whips across the mountain, making for a fast and exhilarating ride. The route passes a couple of crumbling farmhouses and an old mosque, before turning into an asphalt road and finishing in the nearby village of Kasaba. The one-day tour costs $47.

© Bougainville

> **NOTE:** *Cyclists should take a small backpack to carry waterproofs, a small medical kit, a lightweight torch, swimwear and a towel. You should also bring your own cycling helmet and gloves. Remember to pack sun cream and mosquito repellent.*

Exodus (UK ☎ 0870-2405550, www.exodus.co.uk) has a weekly mountain biking tour (five days of cycling) in the mountains north of **Kaş**. They cover an average of 45 km/28 miles a day and are suitable for riders with some off-road experience, as there is limited vehicle support. Treks start in Elmali, 1,200 m/3,900 feet up in the mountains, and follow the Dokuz Goz (Nine Lakes) Trail through a cedar forest to the village of Arif. The next day starts at the ruined theater and rock tombs of Arycanda, a second-century Lycian city renowned for being constantly in debt because of the lavish lifestyle of its inhabitants. Afterwards, it is downhill through Ottoman villages to Finike on the coast. The following day takes riders deeper into the mountains for a 1,200-m/3,900-foot fast downhill along the Soğutcuma Forest Trail, stopping at the Lycian city of Kitanaura along the way. The 45-km/28-mile route undulates along the valley until it hits the coast road. The fifth cycling day is a 50 km/31-mile trek with some challenging climbs before a giant 1,500-m/.9-mile descent through cedar forests on the way back to Kaş. The final day is a grueling 60 km/37 miles along a route known as the Sutleğen Flyer. The rough road passes through more forests and sleepy villages before making a rapid 1,200-m/3,900-foot drop down mountain switchbacks to the village of Kasaba.

The week-long tour costs $790, including accommodation. Exodus hires out specialized Hardrock Comp mountain bikes with suspension forks (additional fee of $150) or you can bring your own bike.

SAIL & CYCLE TRIPS

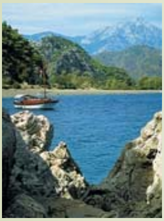
UK tour agent **2 Wheels Treks** (www.2wheeltreks.co.uk) has a combination tour suited to sea lovers who also crave some adventure on two wheels. The weekly sailing and mountain bike trip along the Turquoise Coast encompasses the towns of Marmaris, Dalyan, Göcek, Fethiye and Ölüdeniz. The cycling part mainly uses asphalt roads and crosses some hilly terrain. The trip begins onboard the beautiful *Bahriyeli* gulet in Marmaris. Gulets have eight to 10 cabins, en-suite bathrooms and air conditioning. The boat sails to a bay south of Dalaman, where travelers get on their bikes and go straight into a ride over a sharp mountain pass into the plains of Dalaman, before finishing the day at Sarsala. On the second day, the boat sails to the harbor town of Fethiye. The bikes are unloaded again for a trek through a pine forest and on to the deserted Greek town of Kayakoy and the Blue Lagoon at Ölüdeniz. On the third day, the tour takes in the Lycian ruins of Xanthos, before travelers walk the wooden planks in Saklikent Canyon. The next day brings a 40-km/25-mile cycle ride from the sailing hub of Göcek to Dalyan. Then it is back on the boat to sail along Dalyan Creek past Lycian rock tombs. In the afternoon, riders get on their bikes for a 350-m/1,150-foot climb to the village of Ekincik. On the final day, travelers sail west to the Bozburun Peninsula before getting in the saddle for a 500-m/1,650-foot ascent up a lonely mountain road. Then it is the final descent to the coast road at Izmeler. The tour costs $1,270, including accommodation on the boat, meals, a tour guide and bike hire.

Vancouver-based **Great Explorations** (www.great-explorations.com) has an 11-day sailing and biking trip from Bodrum on the Aegean Coast to the Mediterranean resort of Antalya. The tour is designed for experienced cyclists who can handle treks of 45-65 km/28-40 miles a day. There are options for novices to spend more of their time sailing than cycling. The trip starts with some steep climbs along the Datça Peninsula before a sharp descent into the resort town of Marmaris. Riding out of Marmaris, the route passes some traditional Turkish villages on the way to the ancient city of Kaunos at Dalyan. After three days of riding, it is time to board the yacht for a Blue Voyage between the port of Göcek and Kaş, stopping at the Blue Lagoon in Ölüdeniz, Patara Beach and the nearby town of Kalkan. The next day is spent cruising to the sunken ruins of Kekova before reaching Simena for a hike up to the castle. Cyclists can spend the following day riding a dramatic stretch of road from Andriake to Finike visiting the Church of St.Nicolas and ruins at nearby Myra. Later the same day, they sail to Olympos, where ruins are strewn across marshes behind stunningly beautiful Çirali Beach. The trip finishes with a tour of Antalya's beaches and old town.

ADVENTURES ON WATER

SAILING

Whether you float about in your own boat or take a day trip with a charter company, this is the way to see the irresistibly turquoise waters of the Mediterranean Coast. The green and rocky coast has countless bays and coves carved into it, many of them hiding ancient ruins and magical hamlets.



For thousands of years, the sea has been the best transport along the coast regions. It took until the 1970s for a proper road system to be cut through the mountains, finally replacing the rough paths that had been worn into the land over centuries.

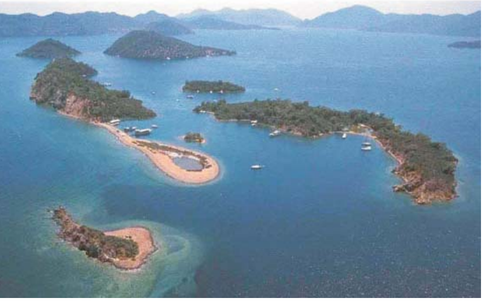
Sailing in Turkey is a totally different experience to sailing in North America. The relatively low prices mean sailing is not the preserve of the wealthy. The pace of life is slow and the emphasis is on culture and history, rather than consumption. For Turks, being on the water is a way of life.

Blue Cruise ✪✪

The most romantic way to see the coastline is to take the Blue Cruise. Graceful teak and mahogany gulets are the workhorses of the Turkish sailing industry. Daily gulet trips can be picked up from marinas all along the coast. There are also longer trips aboard gulets resembling floating hotels.

On the Mediterranean Coast, you can pick up a Blue Cruise gulet anywhere between Marmaris and Olympos. The most popular trips with backpackers are between Fethiye and Demre, and also around Olympos. A three- or four-night gulet trip runs about $200. Boats leave daily at 10am. To book a trip, head down to the harbor the day before you want to sail, so you have time to check out the boats and agree the price.

The best trip from Fethiye or Göcek is the **12 Islands Tour** (*12 Adalar*). Boats take three or four days to sail to Kizilada (Red Island), so called because of the color of its sand at sunset, before heading north to the groups of islands known as Deliktas Adasi and Yassica Adalar. Boats sail on to Zeytin Ada (Olive Island), where there is an Ottoman olive oil pressing workshop, Domuz Adasi (Boar Island), Hamam Koyu, where you can walk to the ruins of a monastery and to Tersane Adasi. From here, they sail to Bedri Rahmi Bay, Gobun Koyu and finally, Sovalye Adasi (Knight Island), where the Knights of St. John were once based.



If you want to take the 12 Islands Tour, pick your boat wisely as some of the boats cram in the passengers and charge high prices for drinks once onboard. **V-Go Tourism Travel Agency** (next to the Tourist Information Office in Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6122113, www.bluecruiseturkey.com) has a three-day/two-night voyage departing between April and December starting at $140. It also offers four-day/three-night voyages between Fethiye and Olympos for $205.

Olympos Yachting (☎ 0242-8921145, www.olymposyachting.com) has gulets that set sail on an eight-day/seven-night cruise from Fethiye to Antalya with stops at Ölüdeniz, Kaş, Kekova and Olympos for the heavenly Çirali Beach. The voyage costs $365 in low season and $435 in mid-summer.

Mare Nostrum (☎ 0542-2430321, www.bluecruiseturkey.net) has a choice of four budget backpacker cruises. The four-day Fethiye-Olympos (or reverse) takes in major coastal sights, including Ölüdeniz, Kaş and Kekova. It costs $160. Shorter cruises around Olympos or Fethiye can be booked for $125. Fees for all the Blue Cruise voyages listed include meals, but not drinks or entrance to archaeological sites.

Day-Sails

Absolute beginners can test the water with day-trips to isolated islands and coves, which are offered by all of the major resorts for about $20 per person. Most of these do not need advance reservations; just get down to the harbor before 10am.

In **Alanya**, boats run by a local co-operative leave the harbor for either one hour, two hours or a full day. They sail past the Red Tower, Tersane, Pirate's Cave, Lover's Cave, Phosphorus Cave and Cleopatra Beach. Each follows the same route, although the full-day tour stops for swimming breaks and lunch. Boats have a guide to tell the story of sites seen en route. Make your booking at one fo the wooden kiosks along the harbor or Yildiz Café on Keykubat Caddesi, ☎ 0242-5125581.

In **Antalya**, boats depart from the harbor in Kaleiçi for an afternoon or evening trip to the Lower Düden Waterfall, which plunges into the sea near Lara Beach.

The harbors in Fethiye (at left) and Göcek are full of gulets setting sail for daily tours. Some are operated by tour agents; others are privately owned boats. For as little as $50 you can have a full-day tour of the coast with lunch included.

Another popular day-trip is from **Marmaris** to **Dalyan**, where you can gaze up at spectacular Lycian tombs cut into the rock face before relaxing on beautiful Iztuzu Beach.

For a different experience, take a tour in one of the glass-bottomed boats to see the submerged tombs and shipwrecks around **Kekova**. Boats can be picked up in Antalya's harbor. They go first to Uluburun, where the wreck of a ship loaded with jars of wine, which sank here around 3000 BC, was excavated by archaeologists. The findings can be

Opposite: Sailboat (© Agencyby/Dreamstime)

seen in the Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology (see page 280). The next stop is **Aperlai**, one of the smallest Lycian cities, followed by **Aquarium Cove**, appropriately named for its crystal-clear turquoise waters. They sail onward to Kale, a tiny village built on the fourth-century necropolis of ancient Simena. You can climb the narrow streets of this picturesque village of whitewashed houses, past Lycian tombs to reach to reach the castle clinging ferociously to the rocks.

BAREBOAT CHARTERS

Travelers with some sailing experience who want more freedom can opt for a bareboat charter or flotilla cruise. Bareboat yachts can be skippered by a captain and crewed by its passengers, who have responsibility for handling the sails and the onboard chores, including cooking and housekeeping. The itinerary is determined by the passengers. Experienced yachtsmen can go one step further and hire their own 10-m/33-foot yacht.

Flotilla sailing is another way of skippering a yacht but with the advantage of being in an organized group of boats all directed by an experienced sailor on the lead vessel.

Yacht charter companies are based in major marinas along the south coast, including Antalya, Kemer, Fethiye and Marmaris. **Windward Islands** (www.mediterranean-adventure.com) has various standards of yachts for charter from Marmaris and Antalya. Prices for a bareboat charter range from $1,500 to $5,000 per week.

Marmaris Sailing (☎ 0252-4172278, www.marmaris-sailing.com) is an independent yachting agency started in 2001. It has bareboat charters starting from $1,700 per week for an eight-berth yacht. **Veladare** (www.veladare.com) has luxury yachts and gulets for cabin charter or bareboat hire. The boats typically have seven to 10 en-suite cabins and can be hired for one week or two. They follow routes from Marmaris to Göcek and Göcek to Kekova. The cost varies between $630 per week for a cabin charter to $2,300 per week for the bareboat charter of a 12-m/40-foot yacht. Drinks are priced reasonably.

© Netsel Marmaris Marina

Marinas

Netsel Marmaris Marina (☎ 0252-4122708, www.netselmarina.com) is one of the largest marinas in the Mediterranean, with moorings for 720 boats. Its cafés, bars and stores are the best places to hang out in the resort.

Club Marina Göcek (☎ 0252-6451800) is a smart marina that is home to large yachts attracted by its private quays.

Setur Antalya Marina (☎ 0242-2591290) has 250 floating berths and can accommodate yachts up to 45 m/148 feet. The marina has all modern conveniences: fuel, technical, and repair services are provided, as well as foreign exchange facilities, 24-hour security, and a market with fresh produce.

Park Marina Kemer (www.kemermarina.com) is surrounded by two beaches and has a decent standard of restaurants, bars and hotels on site. There is also technical assistance.

DIVING

Sites

Alanya has 12 dives sites all based at the foot of the magnificent citadel. Most are rocky with depths ranging from five-40 m/16-130 feet. At its best, visibility here is 25 m/80 feet. Introductory dives take place at the point known as **Broken Stone**, a rocky area to the west of the castle. To the north is **The Tunnel**, a 42-m/138-foot narrow rock pass. Beyond that is the interestingly named **Rambo**. The only sandy dive point in this stretch, Rambo is purported to harbor a seal. South of Broken Stone is **Phosphorous Cave**, a 33-m/108-foot deep cavern used for night dives. Either side of a rocky outcrop are the **Dilvarda Bati** and **Dilvarda Doğu**, the deepest points in the area. These are used for sea current and deep water training. Along the southern edge of the castle are **Lovers Cave** and **Middle Cave**, both plunging to 34 m/112 feet. Octopus, moray eels and lobster can be seen in these waters. Next are **Terrace** and **Pirate Caves**. Nearest the harbor are **Amphora** and **Aquarium**, where visibility drops to five m/16 feet, but there is an abundance of octopus, dusky grouper, lobster and soldier fish.

The **Gulf of Antalya** offers a wide variety of colorful plant and sea life, and is also graveyard for several unlucky World War II fighter planes and ships. The result is some of the most fascinating dive sites along the coast.

The islands in the open seas around **Tekirova** have a wonderful array of sea life, including huge thornback rays, and is also a good location for cave diving. In August and September, a huge number of tuna fish and seals come here.

© Bougainville

Underwater world

The Blue Cruise voyages that stop off in **Fethiye** bring with them hoards of divers. The best sites are Barracuda Reef, the Tunnels and Afkule. At **Barracuda**, the reef is a small island that can be seen from 12 m/39 feet; more experienced divers can explore down to 30 m/98 feet. The point collectively known as **Tunnels** is a series of arched tunnels that experienced divers will be able to swim through without the need for guide lines. The first can be reached after 12 m/39 feet and the deepest is about 18 m/59 feet deep. Lights are recommended so you can explore the crevices that hide red mullet, shrimp and brittle stars. **Afkule** is considered the best dive in Mediterranean Turkey. This colorful wall features daisy and strawberry anemones, gold star coral, soft corals, Devonshire cup corals, lace corals and sea fans, as well as plenty of sea life. It is a must for underwater photographers.

Kaş is on the list of the top 100 dive destinations worldwide. It has some beautiful underwater scenery and a diverse marine life, including loggerhead turtles, stingrays, moray eels and purple sea urchins. There are about 20 dive points around Kaş, ranging from underwater canyons to stone reefs and tunnels. Among the more interesting are the ***Lighthouse***, an Ottoman shipwreck at 22 m/72 feet, and the **Flying Fish**, where the propeller of an Italian war plane lies about 40 m/131 feet below the surface. Nearby is **The Canyon**, so called because of its sudden descent. A cargo ship lies at about 30 m/98 feet.

The waters around **Marmaris** and **Içmeler** have beautiful reefs with colorful corals and sponges. In deeper waters, visibility is up to 40 m/130 feet and you can expect to come face to face with large groupers, shoals of barracuda, octopus and even sea turtles. There are some good wall dives for experienced divers, and more than 50 dive sites in the area. Among the most popular is **Divers Delight Bay**, nicknamed by a local dive school. The bay offers a selection of dives. For novices, there is a 12-m/39-foot dive with an abundance of marine life and hard and soft corals. Experienced divers will enjoy the bay's caves and tunnels in waters that plunge to a depth of 30 m/98 feet. You can see ancient amphorae, as well as moray eels, groupers, stingrays and octopus. **The Wall** site is covered in coral and has large groupers and tuna. You can dive to a depth of 45 m/148 feet; look for the cave about 12 m/39 feet down. A particularly popular dive point in Marmaris is **Kadirga Rock**. The water here is littered with hundreds of amphorae, many of them in fragments. Do not be tempted to take a piece as a souvenir. At **Chimney Cave**, there is a stunning mountain backdrop. The site is multi-level, with most of the dives sticking to a depth of about 18 m/59 feet where you can explore the reef. There is a also a cave with a large swim-through.

BASIC DIVE TRAINING

The PADI Scuba Diver program is a pre-entry level certificate designed for travelers who want to learn the basics of diving in a few days. It teaches the fundamentals of handling diving equipment and basic diving techniques in shallow and open water. Once you have a PADI Scuba Diver certificate you can take a second course to obtain a full PADI Open Water qualification. You just need to be in good health, reasonably fit and able to swim.

Dive Schools

Dolphin Dive (iskele Caddesi 23, Alanya, ☎ 0242-5123030, www.dolphin-dive.com) has daily dive tours departing from its impressive base behind the harbor. The company has been in operation for 16 years and is PADI and CMAS certified. Discovery dives cost $80 and four-day PADI Open Water courses cost $410, including equipment.

Yunus Diving (Konyaalti Beach, Antalya, www.yunusdiving.com) is the best dive school in Antalya. It offers two-hour discovery dives ($30), two-hour licensed dives ($30), and wreck dives ($40). Full equipment rental, including the oxygen tank, is an additional $20. The company also has CMAS skin diving courses for levels one to three. Each course costs $250.

Barakuda Queen (Kaş, ☎ 0532-6136584, www.barakuda-kas.com) is run by Ugur Eroglu and Belma Namli, who have been diving in the region for more than 18 years. The school has discovery dives ($32) and all levels of CMAS and PADI courses. The Open Water course costs $385.

Bougainville (Kaş, ☎ 0242-8363737, www.bougainville-turkey.com) is a highly-professional travel agency run by a British couple, Phil and Alison Buckley. The dive school has half-day discovery courses ($59) and a range of PADI courses from Open Water to Divemaster ($533). Bougainville also runs courses designed for handicapped divers. All fees exclude diving equipment.

Divers Delight (Marmaris, ☎ 0252-4553885; Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6121099, www.diversdelight.com) was established in 1989 by Yasar, a former Turkish Navy Seal Team Officer, and Murat, a PADI Instructor. The company offers the whole gambit of dive packages from try-dives ($65) to four-day PADI Open Water courses ($330) and two-day Advanced Diver course ($235). Rescue Diver and Divemaster courses are also available. Qualified divers can opt for three-day and five-day dive packages (starting at $180). Equipment hire is extra.

RAFTING

For pure exhilaration, it takes a lot to equal the natural high brought on by shooting the rapids. It is great for first-time adventurers because no experience is necessary. You just need to be able to swim and be prepared to get very wet. As well as experiencing the rapids, you get to see beautiful mountain scenery along the calmer stretches of a river.

Rafting can be risky, but that is part of the thrill. A qualified instructor should provide a safety briefing, including tips on paddling and what to do if you fall out of the boat. If you are just learning to raft, try a Class II or III trip. Experienced rafters can find Class IV or V rapids in Turkey.

Daily rafting trips are available in Köprülü Canyon near Antalya and on the Dalaman River.

> **TIP:** *When rafting, the biggest danger is often from the sun. Wear a hat and sunglasses with a cord, and running shoes rather than sandals. Apply sunscreen everywhere except the backs of your legs, this will stop you sliding all over the raft.*

For a river run with a sting in its tail, head east from Antalya for beautiful **Köprülü Canyon**, where you can take a raft 14 km/nine miles upriver, past truly awe-inspiring craggy mountain scenery. When the waters are highest (from April to October) your raft may spin 360 degrees. Most of the time, the scenery is more dramatic than the river. Beginners, including children, would find the Class II and III waters a great introduction to rafting.

Dalaman River has become one of the most popular spots among rafters and runs for 14 km/nine miles. The river has Class III and IV rapids and the route can be completed in three to four hours. Most tour companies offer rafting along a section of the river on their daily expeditions, with longer courses on overnight trips. The rafting season begins in May and ends in August.

Medraft (☎ 0242-3125770, www.medraft.com) was the first rafting company to come to Turkey. Equipment and safety standards are first class. Emphasis is on an invigorating day out, not on thrills and spills. Reservations are essential.

Alternatif Turizm (☎ 0252-4172720, www.alternatif outdoor.com) is another professional rafting company with daily trips on the Dalaman River. The tours run from April until October.

© Alternatif Turizm

Kaunos Tours (☎ 0252-2842816, www.kaunostours.com) has rafting tours along the Dalaman River starting at the village of Akkropru. Dalaman River flows through the village year-round and is at its most wild in the springtime. This stretch of the river has a series of Class III and IV rapids suitable for beginners and intermediate rafters.

KAYAKING

If the thought of shooting rapids makes you queasy, try the altogether more genteel sport of kayaking. Once you get the hang of using oars, steaming across a lake or the sea in a kayak is great fun. The mountain scenery looms above and you can watch birds landing in reed beds and fish swimming in the water. The calm waters around Dalyan and Kekova are studded with ancient ruins that deserve to be admired at a slow pace.

Alternatif Turizm (☎ 0252-4172720, www.alternatif outdoor.com) operates a three-day kayaking and camping trip along Lake Koyceğiz, the creek in Dalyan and out along the coast to Ekincik. Paddle from sleepy Koyceğiz village past the mud baths and Dalyan town to the Lycian

rock tombs and onward to the beach. The lake and river are incredibly calm, making it perfect for spotting wildlife, including the loggerhead turtles that nest in this area. The difficulty level is I and II. The tour operates between April and October and costs $280, including equipment.

In Kaş, **Bougainville** (☎ 0242-8363737, www.bougainville-turkey.com) has sea kayaking trips to the submerged remains of Kekova. As swimming around the ruins is banned, kayaking is the best way of getting up close to the 2,000-year-old walls, foundations and mosaics that dropped into the sea following an earthquake. You can paddle past giant sarcophagi in the water and on the shoreline. The daily trip starts early in the morning to beat the rush of boats heading to ruins at midday. Kayaking costs $57.

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

TREKKING

The southwestern coast of Turkey is often reckoned to be the finest of the Mediterranean coastlines. Here, the mountains of the hinterland meet the sea, forming a profusion of bays, inlets and islands that are extraordinary in their natural beauty. On the flanks of the mountains are beautiful forests of cedar, juniper and Mediterranean oak. The coastline is strewn with the romantic and evocative remains of ancient civilizations. Some of the ancient sites are well trodden by travelers; others are left overgrown and almost forgotten.

The Lycian Way ✪✪

It was along this coastline that British-born Kate Clow turned her life's passion for collecting ancient routes into a 509-km/316-mile way-marked trekking path known as the Lycian Way. The trail is Turkey's longest hiking trail and the most spectacular.

The Lycian Way follows ancient footpaths and mule roads that linked the villages of the Turquoise Coast before the advent of the car. They link the ancient cities once ruled by the fiercely independent Lycians.

The trail begins at the rapidly merging resorts of **Hisaronu-Ovacik** near Fethiye and follows a precipitous path along the shoulder of **Babadağ Mountain**, through **Butterfly Valley** and **Kabak**, to the pretty hamlet of **Faralya**. From here, there is a difficult climb to **Alinca**, where the trail continues along lush mountainside to **Yedi Burnu**, the most westerly point.

Opposite: Kayaking the Koprulu Canyon (Turkey Tourism Board)

The Lycian Way stitches together dozens of ancient cities; some of them are wonderfully alive, while others wither into the scrub. The ruins come thick and fast along this section. Snaking its way back inland, it passes **Sidmya** and **Pydnai**. The ruins of **Letoon** are to the east. At the next headland is the 22-km/14-mile long white-sand beach of **Patara**, with its mysterious sarcophagi and crumbling arches. The route climbs from the beach to the highlands, where goat herds ramble through fruit trees and poppy fields.

The next stretch reaches **Kekova** with its sunken ruins hidden behind the scattered islands. Clinging close to the coast, the path goes to the home of St. Nicholas at **Demre** and the ancient city of **Myra** with its many tombs.

The Lycian Way rises steeply into the mountains through the villages of **Eren** and **Alaca**. It continues to **Finike**, along the orange-blossom route, and on to the lighthouse at **Gelidonia**, an enchanting stretch of hillside that has come to embody the route. From here, it crosses the **Musa Daği** and on to the ancient city of **Olympos** and then **Çirali Beach**, one of the most beautiful in Europe.

Ruin on the Lycian Way (© Middle Earth Travel)

There are two options for the onward route. The first heads for **Phaselis** and the second, more difficult, option climbs **Mount Tahtali**, the highest point on the trail. They combine once again at **Gedelme**, as the route nears its end. There is a final test of aching legs as once again it climbs into the mountains and culminates at the village of **Hisarcan**, 25 km/16 miles from Antalya.

The route is marked with yellow and green signposts along main roads and with red and white stripes on rocks in the mountains. There are also red X signs on rocks that mean you have deviated from the trail. The trail is graded medium to hard, with lots of ascents and descents. It takes about 40 days to hike the entire trail and it is best to divide it into sections.

There are some guesthouses along the first section of the trail and at Patara, Kalkan, Kaş, Myra, Finike, Adrasan, Olympos, Çirali and Tekirova. Along the rest of the route, you will need to camp or stay in a village house.

For more detailed information, see Kate Clow and Terry Richardson's website, www.lycianway.com. There is also a book to guide walkers along the route. You can book treks with Kate via her website or at ☎ 0242-2431148.

THE LYCIANS & THE COAST

The Lycians ruled the coastal region between Fethiye and Antalya. They carved well-ordered cities from limestone in the harsh mountainous terrain. It was under the Lycians that the first democratic union was developed, the Lycian League. This government system was the envy of other classical civilizations and became a forerunner for the modern-day state. The Lycians had a reputation for being proud and peaceful. That was at least until rivals challenged their independence, at which point they became a ferocious opponent.

Many tour companies operate guided treks along sections of the Lycian Way. Here are some recommendations:

Middle Earth Travel (☎ 0384-2712559, www.middle earthtravel.com), respected Cappadocia-based trekking company, has three hikes along the Lycian Way. The one-week Seven Capes Trek begins in Ovacik with a climb up the shoulder of Babadağ and descent into Butterfly Valley. The next few days are spent trekking around the bays and mountains around Ölüdeniz before finishing at the ancient city and beach of Patara. The trek costs $540, including accommodation, meals, transfers and mule support. The route is grade B, which means walking between four to six hours a day and tackling some steep ascents. There are some optional tougher climbs. The eight-day Pirates' Coast Trek ($630) takes in some stunning scenery between Göynuk and Adrasan. Sights include Mount Olympos, the beautiful Çirali Beach and the mysterious flames of Chimerea. The trek ends at the lighthouse at Cape Gelidonia. The grade C route requires some endurance to handle the stony and narrow paths for up to eight hours a day.

Peregrine Adventures (US ☎ 800-227-8747, www.peregrineadventures.com) has a trek along the same section of the Lycian Way. It starts in Kayakoy, the Greek ghost village above Fethiye, and crosses the mountain to Ovacik before taking the vertiginous path along Babadağ that leads to Faralya. This is one of the highlights of the Lycian Way, offering breathtaking views of the Blue Lagoon at Ölüdeniz and Butterfly Valley. The next couple of days are spent trekking through small villages en route to the sand-swollen ruins of Patara. The tour finishes with a drive into Antalya. Peregrine places an emphasis on environmentally responsible travel. This eight-day excursion includes six days of moderate trekking. It costs $695, including accommodation and transfers, most meals and a guide.

KE Adventure (US ☎ 800-497-9675, www.keadventure.com) has a 15-day Lycian Way trek spanning the most captivating section of the trail all the way from Ovacik to Antalya. The first half of the route follows the Ovacik-Faralya-Patara section (as above) before continuing to the ruins of Xanthos, the lighthouse at Gelidonia, and the beach at Çirali, where remains of the ancient city of Olympos are scattered along overgrown marshland. From here, the trail climbs the saddle of Mount Olympos with some steep ascents and descents. The final couple of days are spent in pastures around Göynuk, with more climbing along some high ridges in the Taurus Mountains before the trail drops down to the sea at Göynuk. KE graded the trek as moderate, requiring reasonable levels of fitness. It costs $1,295, including some transfers, a guide, five nights bed-and-breakfast in a hotel and nine nights camping with all meals.

In the cooler months (October to May) you can walk along the beautiful Turquoise Coast. In the hotter months of the year (June through September), head to the hills, where the temperatures are cooler.

Around Marmaris

An easy five-hour trek starts at the village of **Ula**, a rarely visited village about 40 km/25 miles north of Marmaris, and meanders downhill to the sailing town of **Gökova**. The beauty of the hike is that you can drive to the starting point, enjoy the beautiful views across the plains of Gökova and, eventually, across the Gökova Körfezi (Gulf of Gökova) as you make your way through pine-forested hills and hamlets to the sea. The trek follows a zig-zagging mule path and is sometimes steep and narrow.

Around Kas & Kalkan

One popular option is to take a boat to **Ufakdere** then to walk back to Kaş through olive groves, seeking out Lycian tombs along the way. Stop for a swim in the quiet bay at **Limangazi**. The walk takes just over four hours.

A shorter trek starts with a drive to the ruins of **Antiphellos** (on the hillside above Kaş) before walking downhill to town with great views of both the Kaş Peninsula and the Greek island of Meis.

One of the best walks in the area starts at the ancient site of **Phellos** and follows the Lycian Way through the cool, sweet-smelling pine forests to **Hacioglan**. This trek follows mountainous terrain and reaches an altitude of 1,010 m/3,310 feet. It takes almost six hours to complete the route.

For a trek that finishes with a dreamy plunge into the sea off the Mediterranean's longest beach, drive to **Yeşilköy**, north of Kalkan, and walk along an ancient aqueduct on the way down to the platinum sands of Patara Beach.

Trekking Companies

Alternatif Turizm (☎ 0252-4172720, www.alternatif outdoor.com) has guided walks ($50 each) around Marmaris for groups of at least four people.

Bougainville (☎ 0242-8363737, www.bougainville-turkey.com) leads treks around Kaş and Kalkan. Prices start at $18 per person for a group of 13; $25 per person for a group of four-seven.

TODOSK (Toroslar Doğa Sporlari Klubu, ☎ 0242-2481391) is a trekking club associated with the Turkish Mountaineering Federation. The club arranges weekend and longer outings for anyone from nature lovers to regular hill walkers. Advanced booking is essential.

CANYONING

Scrambling over rocks, wading through a river and throwing yourself into deep, cold pools of water may not be everyone's idea of a fun day out. Unless you have a head for heights, are pretty fit and have something of the crazy about you, steer clear. But if you are looking for an adrenaline rush, then canyoning is the way to get it.

Canyoning is one of the fastest-growing outdoor sports in Turkey. At its most basic, the sport involves following a river along its course through a gulley, getting from one point to another using a mixture of climbing and caving techniques.

A typical day will see adventurers splash through the shallower sections of a river, climb over giant boulders and plunge from heights of 10-20 m/33-66 feet into clear pools. Then, you must swim through the pools to the next set of rocks and drag yourself out. If that is not enough, you will have to absail down waterfalls or difficult sections of a canyon where it is dangerous to jump. Then, you need to do it all again.

A day of canyoning will last for about six or seven hours. Expect to get very wet, incredibly exhausted and totally pumped up. While no experience is necessary, you should bring the right attitude. This is an extreme sport.

> **TIP:** *Wear waterproof hiking or sports shoes, shorts and a T-shirt (not cotton). Invest in a cord for glasses. Remember to take dry clothes that can be left in a support vehicle. Do not bother taking cash, as you will not need it.*

Bougainville Travel (☎ 0242-8363737, www.bougainville-turkey.com) has treks through Kibris, Saklikent and Kaputaş canyons. Bougainville has professional canyoning guides who put the emphasis on safety. Briefings are given on abseiling and the best way to make the jumps. A full day – including lunch, wet suit and equipment – is $65.

CLIMBING

Anyone who has taken a flight across Turkey will attest to the magnificent mountain ranges that, from the sky, appear to engulf the entire country. Mountains rise in all directions across Anatolia. Some ranges are wild and barren; others are emerald green and carpeted in wild flowers. Climbers will find rocky peaks, glaciers and volcanoes offering plenty of challenges. The **Taurus Mountains** (Toros) are the wes-

Opposite: Canyoning (© Bouganville)

Taurus Mountains (© Zeynel Cebeci)

ternmost branch of the great mountain chain that stretches across Asia to the Himalayan mountain belt. The Turkish section of this range follows the southern border of Anatolia.

MOUNTAINS & CULTURE

The mountains of Turkey have greatly influenced its culture. For centuries, nomads and semi-nomadic people have migrated each summer to the fresh mountain pastures. These alpine meadows, called *yayla*, still represent a firm tie to traditional culture with many festivals held each year to celebrate the return of the men to their villages.

The western branch of the Taurus Mountains, the **Bey Mountain range**, runs parallel to the Gulf of Antalya. Altitudes along the range rise 600-3,000 m/2,000-10,000 feet. The most striking peaks are Tekedorugu, Bakirlidağ and Kizlarsivrisi, which is the tallest.

Tahtali, west of Kemer, provides another interesting ascent. It rises to 2,360 m/7,750 feet, with the first 2,000 m/6,500 feet going through pine forests. The final climb is made along a more barren section facing the coast and offers magnificent views.

The region has 300 days of sunshine a year and climbing is possible year-round, although the best time is between April and June. Each of the peaks can be climbed in one day and the views of the sea and Antalya are worth the effort.

The best starting point for climbers is **Elmali**, a short drive inland from Antalya. The peak of Kizlarsivrisi can be reached from Elmali with a base camp set up in the Camcukuru highlands. It is possible to reach the summit and return to camp in one day. You can begin a climb up Tahtali drive from Kemer to Soğukpinar on the mountain's northern slope, where it is possible to set up camp. An off-road vehicle is recommended.

The limestone-rich **Bolkar Mountains** begin in Reşadiye in the southwest and run along the southern coast of Turkey until they connect to the Zaganos Mountains in Iran. The Turkish section of the range features Göksu River to the west and Pozanti River to the east.

There are many peaks over 3,000 m/10,000 feet in this range and Medeksiz is the highest peak. The northern flank of the range is the best route for an ascent to the highest summits. The peaks are covered in snow in winter and spring, which means the best time to climb is between May and August.

To climb **Medeksiz**, you should start from the village of Maden. In summer, you can camp at the Meydan plateau, which is accessible in an off-road vehicle.

The Ministry of Tourism has general information on climbing and trekking, ☎ 0312-2128300. Also, **Middle East Technical University** has a Department of Sports Mountaineering and Skiing, www.metu.edu.tr, that might be worth a call.

GOLF

Belek, 30 minutes drive from Antalya's airport, is fast becoming golfers' central in Turkey. The beach resort has six good standard golf courses, including a new one designed by Nick Faldo, captain of the European Ryder Cup team. Large resort hotels and private villas have sprung up along the beach catering mainly to European golfers.

The course at the **National Golf Club** (Belek Turizm Merkezi, Serik, ☎ 0242-7255400, www.nationalturkey.com) was the first in Turkey to host an international professional golf tournament, albeit the Turkish

Seniors Open. The course, designed by Ryder Cup player David Feherty, was cut into a forest of pine and eucalyptus and is flanked by the Taurus Mountains. It was voted among the top 40 courses in Europe in 2001. There is also a 40-bay driving range and a nine-hole short course.

Antalya Golf Club (☎ 0242-7255970, www.antalyagolfclub.com.tr) has two courses. The Pasha Course is a shorter, par 72-course with wide fairways suited to higher handicap players. It has some tricky dog-legs and undulating greens to test more experienced players. The Sultan Course is a longer and more challenging par 72-course. Both are set within a forest of giant umbrella pines. The course has a training academy offering advice on aspects of the game and lessons. There is also an impressive, contemporary clubhouse.

Tat International Golf Club (Antalya, ☎ 0242-7255303, www.takgolf.com.tr) is a 27-hole course, giving the option of playing three different combinations of 18 holes. The course is set out between a river and the Mediterranean Sea. The final seven holes run alongside the beach.

Surrounded by pine forests and lakes, **Gloria Golf Club** (www.gloria.com.tr) has a beautiful setting. It has become so popular that a new course was opened in 2005, giving it a total of three. The new course, designed by French designer Michael Gayon, has a testing 67 bunkers, four lakes and undulating greens.

Nobilis Golf Club (in Belek), designed by course architect Dave Thomas, is a narrow, challenging course almost surrounded by water.

The **Cornelia Faldo Golf Club** (☎ 0242-7101600, www.corneliagolfresort.com), designed by Nick Faldo, opened at the end of 2006. It is the centerpiece of the Cornelia Deluxe Resort in Belek. The club has a 27-hole championship course and state-of-the-art training school.

© Cornelia Faldo Golf Club

Golf Packages

Golf Turkey (☎ 0242-3120444, www.golfturkey.com) specializes in Mediterranean golf vacations and can organize flights, hotels and even guarantee tee times for any of the courses.

Bilyana Golf (☎ 0242-3127262, www.golfturkey.org) is an Antalya-based agency set up six years ago with the sole aim of running golf trips in the region. The company can organize flights, hotels, car hire and green packages.

ADVENTURES ON SNOW

© Saklikent Ski Resort

Saklikent, 50 km/31 miles northwest of Antalya in the Bey Dağ range, has snow from January to March. Antalya residents love to boast that you can ski in the morning and lie on the beach in the afternoon. In reality, the ski season is short and the winter sun can be broken by downpours. The resort has slopes for beginners and intermediate level skiers; there are no runs to challenge advanced skiers. Skis and snowboards can be rented at reasonable prices and lessons are available. To reach the resort, it is advisable to hire a car or book a private transfer if you are traveling in a group.

ADVENTURES IN THE AIR

PARAGLIDING

Adventurers in search of the ultimate adrenaline rush should buckle up for the ride of their lives. The skies above Kaş and Ölüdeniz are filled with the brightly-colored canopies of paragliders flying down from the mountains.

All paragliding flights are tandem with a qualified instructor who takes control of the take-off, the speed and direction during the flight itself, and the landing. They will instruct you how to run the few steps off the mountain, sit in the small canvas seat after jump-off and how to land. This means you are literally putting your life in their hands. For many, that is part of the thrill.

Ölüdeniz is rated the best place for paragliding in Europe. The take-off is made from Babadağ at a daunting height of 2,000 m/6,500 feet. Getting up the mountain in the back of a jeep is almost as terrifying as running off the edge of it. It takes about 45 minutes to make the descent with spine-tingling views over the Blue Lagoon, Butterfly Valley and the surrounding mountains. The landing is made on Belceğiz Beach.

In **Kaş**, paragliders take off at an altitude of 1,000 m/3,300 feet from Asaz Mountain above the town. The 30-minute flight gives a spectacular glimpse of Kaş harbor and the peninsula, and over the Greek island of Meis. Most tour agencies capture the experience on camera and you can purchase a DVD for an additional fee afterwards. So try not to scream too loud.

> **NOTE:** *You will need comfortable clothing and a sturdy pair of shoes or boots. Take a small bottle of water and a camera.*

Bougainville Travel (☎ 0242-8363737, www.bougainville-turkey.com) is so conscious about safe flying it hired a former instructor from the Turkish Air Force, Huseyin Veske, to lead its paragliding trips. The best period for flying is May through October. Tandem flights in Kaş cost $150.

Sky Paragliding (☎ 0242-8363291, www.skyparagliding.com) flies from both Babadağ in Ölüdeniz and Asaz in Kaş. Tandem flights cost $130.

You've never seen a tree until you
have seen its shadow from the sky.
Amelia Earhart

SkySports (☎ 0252-6170511, www.skysports-turkey.com) was the first professional paragliding company established in Turkey. Tandem flights in Ölüdeniz cost $130, including equipment. Flights are made four or five times a day from the end of April to the beginning of November. Six-day basic instruction courses are also available ($850). To earn your wings as a solo paraglider, you will need to pass the theory stage and make 30 supervised flights.

© SkySports

ADVENTURES ON HORSEBACK

© Bagana Horse Club

Bagana Horse Club (on the road to Termessos, 17 km/11 miles from Antalya, ☎ 0242-4252044, www.baganahorseclub.net) is the most professional riding school in the country. The spirited German owner, Susanne, is full of passion for her horses and the outdoor life found in the forests and creeks around her ranch. The school has lessons for beginners, dressage, show jumping and treks into the surrounding countryside, framed by the Bey Dağ. Fully aware of the power of her horses, Susanne only allows riders to join her treks if they can demonstrate some riding prowess. Otherwise, you can expect to spend a couple of days being taught the basics in the ring before venturing out. A 45-minute riding lesson costs $30 and a two-hour forest trek costs about $60. Riding and accommodation packages are available.

Advanced riders would be impressed to see the list of successes the stable has chalked up in dressage competitions. It is also having remarkable success with a program called Hippo Therapy, a type of physiotherapy for children with handicaps using horses as a stimulus. Another program for children (aged 10-14) is the annual summer camp. It offers a weekly itinerary stuffed with riding and language lessons, nature walks and daily grooming and mucking out of the horses ($380, including accommodation and meals).

Berke Ranch (Camyuva, ☎ 0242-8180333, www.hotel-berkeranch.com) is a remote ranch at the foot of Tahtali Mountain, the second-highest peak of the Taurus Mountains. The riding school has at least 25 Arab, English thoroughbred, Halflinger and European-bred horses. Novice riders can take lessons in the manege. For experienced riders, there are daily and weekly tours into the pine forests, mountains and bays around the ranch. Prices vary from $30 for lessons to $45 for a two-hour trek in the forest. If you want to stay at the ranch, horse riding and accommodation packages are available.

© Berke Ranch

© Desperado Ranch

Desperado Ranch (20 km/12 miles from Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6336011, www.desperado-ranch.de) is another respected family-run stable run founded in 1997. It has a varied program with riding lessons, half- and full-day treks, as well as eight-day riding tours. The horses include English thoroughbreds and Arabs. Single riding lessons cost $50. There is an eight-day trek into the meadows and rivers around Fethiye ($1,350).

CULTURAL ADVENTURES

FESTIVALS

The annual **Altin Portakal (Golden Orange) Film Festival** has been hosted by Antalya every September for 30 years. It attracts film buffs from all over the world, and many of the films are shown in their original language. It is essential to book tickets in advance (☎ 0242-2486302).

The **Aspendos International Opera and Ballet Festival** is set within the stunning 2,000-year-old amphitheater at Aspendos, 45 km/28 miles from Antalya. The magnificent theater has perfect acoustics and its atmosphere is utterly enchanting. The festival is held in June and July. Tickets and bus transfers can be purchased from the Tourist Information Offices in Antalya and Alanya. These tickets are about a third cheaper than those sold by tour agents.

ART GALLERIES

Antalya Güzel Art Gallery, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, has painting, sculpture and photography exhibitions.

Antalya Museum, Kenan Evren Bulvari Konyaalti, ☎ 0242-2414528, has a separate art gallery that features Turkish and foreign artists.

Art House, Pamir Caddesi 26/A, Antalya, ☎ 0242-2424141. This is a privately owned gallery showing exhibitions of local artists. Many of the works are available for sale.

ART COURSES

The **Art Camp** in the village of Kayaköy, close to Fethiye, is organized by Fototrek Fotograf Merkezi (Fototrek Photo Center). It takes place each year in July and August and sessions last for one week. The workshops cover photography, painting, ceramics and decorative arts. The lessons end each day at noon and participants head out into the hills in search of inspiration in the afternoon. ☎ 0212-2519014.

IAM is an arts and culture center belonging to a social foundation. It is a retreat for artists, musicians, actors and writers who want to be inspired by the dramatic setting and meet like-minded people. Individuals can hire the studios or join one of the courses hosted by visiting professional artists. The center has 23 spacious bedrooms. Contact Turkiye Toplum Hizmetleri Vakfi (Turkish Community Services Foundation), ☎ 0216-3254116 or 0252-4767081.

ADVENTURES FOR THE BODY & SOUL

TURKISH BATHS

Antalya Yeni Hamami, Sinan Mahallesi, 1255 Sokak 3/A, caters to tourists with German- and English-speaking staff. Open 6am until midnight.

Also in Antalya, opposite the Balbey Mosque, is **Cumhuriyet Hamami**, Balbey Mahallesi, 403 Sokak 28. It's a beautiful old *hamam* that offers an authentic scrub down. Open 7am until midnight.

Sefa Hamam, Barbaros Mahallesi, Kocatepe Sokak 32, Kaleiçi, Antalya. This 600-year-old *hamam* is set in the middle of the old town. Traditional soap massages and oil massages can be purchased. Open 6am until midnight.

Tarihi Fethiye Hamami, Hamam Sokak 2, Paspatur Bazaar, Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6149318, www.oldturkishbath.net, dates from the 16th century. It offers traditional Turkish massage in separate and mixed baths, as well as aromatherapy massages using rose oil.

YOGA & CREATIVE WRITING CLASSES

© Huzur Vadisi

Huzur Vadisi (☎ 0252-6440008, www.huzurvadisi.com) is a retreat in the pine forests above the sailing town of Göcek. You can stay in a traditional nomadic tent called a yurt or groups of six can hire the Zeytin Evi (Olive House), a charming two-storey farmhouse. There are several different yoga courses (Bikram, Hatha and Kundalini) and also "just relax" weekly retreats, which is tantamount to lazing around in the garden, swimming in the pool or walking in the forest. Prices for weekly courses vary from $660 to $1,090.

Alternatively, you can sign up for one of the retreat's creative writing courses ($900). Philippa Pride, a publishing veteran who is Stephen King's British publisher, led the course in 2006.

SHOPPING

ALANYA

Alanya's **bazaar**, set between the *dolmus* station and the harbor, is filled with shops selling men's and women's clothes, leather handbags and belts, silver and gold jewelry and handmade tableware.

ANTAKYA

In the center of Antakya's old district is **Uzun Çarşi**, a charming bazaar catering mainly to locals. The stalls may not be as vivid as in other towns, but the atmosphere is low key and the prices are low. Every kind of textile can be purchased here, as well as perfume, toiletries and children's toys. Next door are the smaller **Ayakkabicilar**, the shoemakers' bazaar, and **Kuyumcular Çarşi**, or goldsmiths' bazaar.

ANTALYA

If you are looking for quality clothing and handicrafts, head for **Cumhuriyet Caddesi** and **Konyaalti Caddesi**. To the north across Atatürk Caddesi is Antalya's historic bazaar (**Kapali Çarşisi**). The marketplace, known for its jewelry stores, is a good place to look for bold, yellow-gold necklaces, rings, earrings, bangles and other items, as well as more delicate varieties. You can also lay your hands on beautiful handmade carpets and kilims, although they may not be at the best prices.

Close by is **Iki Kapili Han**, a restored bedesten (covered market) that has more jewelry and carpet shops. **Halk Pazari** (Cebesoy Caddesi; open daily) has a huge selection of fruit and vegetables, spices, tea and Turkish delight.

Golden Perge Shopping Center, (Aksu, 10 km/six miles east of Antalya) is a luxury shopping mall that sells jewelry, gifts and carpets. A wide range of the jewelry is made in workshops in the mall and everything is beautifully displayed.

Antalya Shopping Center, Tuzcular Mahallesi Imaret, Araligi Sokak 9, ☎ 0242-2474891, has fine quality carpets and kilims. Remember to bargain hard.

The **Antik Bazaar**, Selçuk Mahallesi, Izmirli Ali Efendi Sokak 12. A famous and reliable store with a wide selection of carpets and kilims.

© Erencet

Antalya sunset

Pasabahçe, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, Vakif Ishani 34, is the largest glassmaker in the country. Come here for all sorts of vases and pottery.

Benetton, Anafartalar Caddesi, Selekler Çarşisi 106-108, has four outlets in the city. This one is the most central.

Beyman, Konyaalti Caddesi 22/B, is part of a Turkish chain. It sells smart shirts and jeans.

Ipek Ucar, Konyaalti Caddesi 8, sells quality underwear and swimsuits.

Polo Garage, Konyaalti Caddesi 46, offers trendy designer women's and men's wear.

Quicksilver, Konyaalti Caddesi 48C, has fashionable unisex clothing.

Ottimo Leather Center, Sinan Mahallesi, Serik Caddesi 451, opposite the airport, ☎ 0242-3402612, has high-quality leather goods, including some quirky items.

Rose Leather, Iskele Caddesi 20, ☎ 0242-2414879. Rose Leather has a wide range of leather goods hand-painted by a local artist.

Royal Leather, Atatürk Caddesi 81/83, ☎ 0242-2487507, is a large outlet of leather handbags, jackets and wallets.

The Music Store, Hukumet Caddesi 24, has three floors of music, books, magazines and gadgets.

FETHIYE

The weekly **market**, held every Tuesday from early morning until dusk, is the largest on the southwest coast. It takes a couple of hours to wander around the stalls of fruit and vegetables, fake designer watches and clothes, sunglasses and souvenirs. The market is not the best place to find a bargain as the stall holders are spoilt by the constant trade from British tourists. Stop for a Turkish pancake (*gözleme*) or kebab at one of the outdoor cafés next to the market.

There is a **handicrafts and jewelry market** in the harbor behind the Gima supermarket. Here you can pick up inexpensive beaded jewelry, as well as unusual handmade items. If you still cannot find what you are looking for, head to **Paspatur**, the narrow streets of the old city, where stores sell outdoor and surf gear, handbags and wallets, alongside lots of tourist tat.

KALKAN

Kalkan's **market** is held every Thursday on a lane at the top of the town. It is not as big as others along the coast, but you can pick up essentials at good prices. The selection of food stalls is good.

Don Quixote, Yaliboyu Mahallesi, ☎ 0242-8442033, sells handmade pottery, glass and ironwork. It is a great place to hunt for unusual souvenirs.

Gallery Sarpedon, underneath the Hotel Pirat in the harbor, ☎ 0242-8442849, displays a selection of original watercolors and oil paintings, as well as reproductions by Turkish artists.

KAS

Kaş has a good range of small retailers selling decorative wooden furniture, carpets, ceramics, local fabrics, Turkish glass lanterns and jewelry. A **bazaar** is held every Friday on the Kaş-Fethiye highway. There are also a number of small supermarkets and bakeries on the main street leading into the town.

NIGHTLIFE

ALANYA

Anchor, Iskele Caddesi 82, ☎ 0242-5136487, seaport@superonline.com, open all day. The sophisticated Anchor bar is part of the Seaport Hotel close to the harbor. Prop yourself up at the sleek black marble bar and enjoy an ice-cold cocktail.

Celo Café & Bar, Iskele Caddesi 36, ☎ 0242-5114290, open 10pm-3am, is an ode to Che Guevara. Turkish *saz* music is played every night.

James Dean, Iskele Caddesi 4, ☎ 0242-5136101, open 10pm-late. A loud and lively themed disco bar.

ANTAKYA

Vivaldi Café, Inönü Caddesi, Koşk Apt. No. 3, open 9am-1am. This relaxed wood-paneled bar serves coffee, alcohol and snacks.

NBA Café, open 8am-12am. Pizza, beer and cocktails are served at this trendy sports-themed bar on the river.

ANTALYA

Cab Bar, Kaleiçi, is a popular, contemporary bar that stands out from the crowd in the old town.

Castle Café Bar, Kilicaslan Mahallesi, Hidirlik Sokak 48/1, ☎ 0242-2423188. Tucked away in a corner overlooking the harbor, the bar is a laid-back hangout for locals. Snacks are served.

Cizgi Café & Bar, Uzun Çarşi 28, Kaleiçi, is a lively bar with a long cocktail list.

Mr. White's Bar, Kaleiçi Caddesi 31/33, is one of the city's best. Live jazz music after midnight.

Sante Café & Bar, Yat Limani. Live Turkish music and a DJ create the atmosphere.

Sav Beach, Konyaalti Beach Park, ☎ 0242-2386041, open 10am-5am. This is the coolest club on the beach. It has a Miami-style Art Deco bar and oversized cushions and sun loungers scattered across a deck that leads on to the beach. DJs and live bands keep the music going until the sun comes up.

Visage Live Bar, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, has sea views and live bands.

Yigit Beach Club, Konyaaltu Beach Park, ☎ 0242-2376662, open 10am-5am. Yigit is another escape from the rowdy neon bars along the beach. It is stylish and relaxed. Snacks and drinks are served all day.

DALYAN

Shaman Bar, Maras Mahallesi 71, open 7pm-late. The cool, outdoor bar is at the end of the main bar and restaurant strip in Dalyan. It has a relaxed atmosphere and is a break from the usual pulsating disco bars.

FETHIYE

Car Cemetery Bar, Hamam Sokak 25, ☎ 0252-6127872, open 10am-4am. Two cars breaking out of a wall mark the entrance to one of the town's most popular bars. Grab an outdoor table for serious people watching while sipping a Jaguar or BMW cocktail. Breakfast and lunch.

KAS

Mavi Bar, Uzun Çarşi Caddesi. The music is loud and the walls, if you can see them through the gloom, are covered with giant posters from cult films. Mavi is a popular hangout with divers.

The bar at **Zeytin** overlooks the harbor and has an extensive list of cocktails.

SIDE

Light House Bar & Disco, in the harbor, ☎ 0242-7533588, open 9pm-5am. This club is set in an old house and has two outside bars overlooking the harbor and its whitewashed lighthouse in the middle of Side's tourist hive. Turkish and Western pop is played every night from spring until the fall.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL PRICES	
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Costs given are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

ADANA

Adana Hilton S.A., haci Sabanci Bulvari 1, Yuregir, ☎ 0322-3555000, www.hilton.com, is a 308-room hotel overlooking the Seyhan River. It has all the modern conveniences you would expect from the Hilton chain. There are two rooms designed for disabled travelers. $$$

© Hilton Hotels

ALANYA

Bedesten Hotel, Iç Kale (within the walls of the castle), ☎ 0242-5121234, bedestenhotel@hotmail.com. The stone inn has been turned into a 22-room boutique hotel with a swimming pool overlooking the castle walls. The rooms are simply furnished. The real gem is the huge fifth-century cistern in the grounds. $$

Grand Kaptan, Oba Göl Mevkii, ☎ 0242-5140101, www.kaptanhotels.com, grandkaptan@kaptanhotels.com, has larger-than-average rooms and balconies overlooking the beach or swimming pool. There is a pool bar and choice of restaurants, including à la carte and open buffet. A free shuttle bus runs regularly into downtown Alanya. $$$

© Seaport Hotel

Seaport Hotel, Iskele Caddesi 82, ☎ 0242-5136487, www.hotelseaport.com. The 60-room hotel was opened three years ago and retains a well-heeled appearance. The rooms have views of Alanya Castle, Red Tower or the harbor. One room is adapted for disabled travelers. $$$

ANTAKYA

Antik Beyazit Hotel, Hukumet Caddesi 4, ☎ 0326-2162900, is a 27-room boutique hotel in the middle of the shopping and restaurant district. The French colonial-style building dates from 1903. No restaurant. $$$

Büyük Antakya Oteli, Atatürk Caddesi 8, ☎ 0326-2135858, www.buyukantakyaoteli.com. This is a luxury hotel overlooking the river and close to the Archaeology Museum. The 72 rooms have a mini-bar, Internet access and TV. There is a busy bar and nightclub. $$$

Gokcen Otel, Yavuz Sultan Selim Caddesi, 105 Sokak 3, www.gokcenotel.com, offers comfortable, cheap rooms in an industrial zone near the bus station. Not advisable for sole women travelers. $$

Hotel Orontes, Istiklal Caddesi 58, ☎ 0326-2145931, www.oronteshotel.com. The glass exterior of the Orontes makes it look slightly soulless. Inside, the rooms are comfortable and clean with satellite TV and air conditioning. The hotel also has an American bar. $$

© Savon Hotel

AUTHOR PICK: Savon Hotel, Kurtuluş Caddesi 192, ☎ 0326-2146355, www.savonhotel.com.tr. A sophisticated hotel set in a converted 1850s olive oil factory, the Savon was opened in 2001 after a two-year renovation. Larger-than-average rooms are pure luxury. $$$

ANTALYA

AUTHOR PICK: Atelya Art Hotel, Kaleiçi Barbaros Mahallesi, Civelek Sokak 21, ☎ 0242-2416416, www.atelyahotel.com. The owner, Hakan, has spent 20 years creating this charming Ottoman hideaway in the middle of the old city. It is set around four half-timber houses. His most recently renovated rooms, named after Ottoman sultans, are furnished with rich textiles and antique lamps and furniture. The main house has a secluded garden courtyard with a bar and restaurant open to hotel guests. $$

© Atelya Art Hotel

AUTHOR PICK: Bagana Horse Club, Yukari Karaman, Duzlercami, ☎ 0242-4252044, www.baganahorseclub.net. Bagana is run by Susanne Pape, an infectious German lady, and her husband. The ranch has 30 horses, two dogs and countless cats. It is surrounded by meadows with trails for horse riding and trekking and has the rugged backdrop of the Tarsus Mountains. Susan runs a highly professional riding school and has had great success with her therapy sessions for children with handicaps. It is almost incidental that there is a cosy lounge and restaurant and an outdoor swimming pool. $$

© Best Western Hotels

Best Western Khan, Elamli Mahallesi Kazim Ozalp Caddesi 55, ☎ 0242-2483870, www.khanhotel.com, is a good standard hotel within an unattractive block 10 minutes walk from the old town. The hotel has all the modern facilities, including an Internet center, swimming pool, hamam, sauna and fitness center. The top-floor bar has panoramic views of the city. $$$

Blue Sea Garden, Kilincarslan Mahallesi, Hesapci Sokak 65/A, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0242-2488213, bluseagarden@mynet.com. This newly opened hotel is set in an old house. Part of the garden has been taken over by a swimming pool. The 16 rooms are functional and spotless. $$

Hotel Hadrianus, Kilincaslan Mahallesi, Zeytin Sokak 4, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0242-2440030, www.hadrianushotel.com. The Gunbey family has tastefully revived this Ottoman house in the heart of Kaleiçi. The 12 rooms each have a different theme and are decorated with Ottoman antiques and fabrics. The spacious garden has lots of hidden seating areas. $$

© Hillside SU

Hillside Su, Konyaalti, Antalya, ☎ 0242-2490700, www.hillsidesu.com. The phrase "utterly cool" best describes this five-star resort. The six restaurants and three bars alone are a reason to stay here. The spa is a perfect antidote to all that over-indulgence. Located 1.5 km/.9 miles outside Antalya city center. $$$-$$$$

AUTHOR PICK: **Ninova Pansiyon**, Barbaros Mahallesi, Hamit Efendi Sokak 8, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0242-2489684, info@ninovapension.com. Ninova is a delightful old house that has been beautifully revived. It is situated on a twisting lane near to Hadrian's Gate and the modern shopping streets of Antalya. $$

Sabah Pensiyon, Kilincaslan Mahallesi, Hesapci Sokak 60, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0242-2475345, www.sabahpansiyon.8m.com, has small, but clean, rooms. Some can accommodate groups of friends or families. $$

Secret Palace, Kilincaslan Mahallesi, Firin Sokak, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0242-2441060. The unassuming exterior of this hotel hides the secret of a grand entrance hall and luxurious rooms. There is a kidney-shaped pool and bar in the courtyard garden. $$$

DALYAN

AUTHOR PICK: Happy Caretta Hotel, Maras Caddesi, ☎ 0252-2842109, www.happycaretta.com, sits at the far end of the main street on the side of the river that runs through town. Rooms are homely, with large beds covered by crisp white cotton duvets. It is the service and location that make the hotel special. The garden is packed with cypress trees and has an array of nooks and crannies, as well as a couple of hammocks, in which to sit and gaze at the river and Lycian rock tombs. Boat trips are available to nearby sites. $$

© Happy Caretta Hotel

Adem's Pension, Maras Caddesi, ☎ 0252-2845005, www.ademspension.com, is friendly and clean. Its nine rooms include double and twin rooms, all with private bathroom, TV and air conditioning. You will be accompanied everywhere by the owner's scruffy, but loveable dog. $

Villa Gokbel, Gokbel, ☎ 0252-2890046, www.villagokbel.com, aat@ada.net.tr, has eight rooms. It looks like a private house because it was originally built as the summer residence of the owner, Arslan, before he turned his hand to being an hotelier. There is a swimming pool. Free pick-up from Dalaman Airport. $$

© Villa Gokbel

DATÇA

Mare, Yanik Harman Mevkii, ☎ 0252-7123211, www.otelmare.com. This beachside hotel has palm-tree filled gardens with a swimming pool. There is a contemporary terrace bar where a buffet dinner is served. The rooms are basic, but modern and comfortable. $$

AUTHOR PICK: Mehmet Ali Aga Konaği, Reşadiye, ☎ 0252-7129257, www.kocaev.com, sena@kocaev.com. This mansion was the former home of the Tuhfezade family, who were influential in the social and economic life of Datça for 200 years. The current owners, Sena Pir and her family, have poured an enormous amount of money and dedication into restoring the great house. The attention to detail is astonishing, especially in the Main Room, where 19th-century frescoes have been painstakingly revived. The hotel would be a museum if it were not for the warm welcome given by Sena and her engaging staff. $$$$

FETHIYE & ÖLÜDENIZ

Black Tree Cottages, above Kabak Gorge in the foothills of Babadağ, ☎ 0252-6170045, www.blacktree.net. These rustic and remote one- , two- and three-bedroom cottages were built from local stone and cedar wood to fit in with the 200-year-old farmhouse at the center of the farm. They have open fires and give a real home-on-the-range feeling. Farm animals wander around the grounds. A touch of luxury is added with the large swimming pool. The farm offers several activities, including horseback riding, mountain bike hire and organized treks. $$

© Black Tree Cottages

AUTHOR PICK: Butterfly Valley, ☎ 0536-9397540, www.butterflyvalley.com. Stay in a wooden bungalow on the beach in the backpacker haven of Butterfly Valley. The accommodation is extremely basic and you should take a camping mat and sleeping bag. Butterfly Valley is accessible only by a half-hour boat ride. There are three departures every day from the beach at Ölüdeniz (at 11am, 2pm and 6pm). $

Kabak Natural Life, Kabak Mahallesi, Faralya, ☎ 0252-6421181, www.kabaknaturallife.com, is the new, and more upmarket, Butterfly Valley. The stunning and little discovered cove sits amid thick vegetation a 20-minute hike down the mountain. The accommodation is primitive and consists of tree houses, tents and shared showers. Beautiful isolation. $$

© Oyster Residences

AUTHOR PICK: Oyster Residences, on Belceğiz Beach, Ölüdeniz, ☎ 0252-6170765, www.oysterresidences.com, is a sublime boutique hotel set around an olive-tree garden and pool. You can almost step from your luxuriously decorated room, complete with LCD TV, on to the beach where there is a small beach club. $$$

AUTHOR PICK: Paradise Garden, Belcekiz Mevkii, Ölüdeniz, ☎ 0252-6170545, www.paradisegardenhotel.com, is almost lost among the flowers and trees of the terraced garden set across a precipitous hill above Ölüdeniz. It was a private house before the owner, Mr. Gursu, had the vision to open it as a hotel. There are three swimming pools in the grounds, including one built into a cave and fed by a fresh-water spring. The lounge and bar are stylish spaces that open on to the garden. The hotel is run by a good-humored team who overshadow the lack of imagination in the design of the rooms. $$$

© Paradise Garden

V-Go's Hotel & Guest House, 2 Karagozler Ordu Caddesi 66, Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6144004, www.boatcruisesturkey.com. The V-Go yacht and travel agency has renovated this guesthouse in the center of Fethiye. It has 14 bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, a swimming pool and laundry. There is free Internet access and hot drinks in reception and a pick-up service from Fethiye bus station. $

AUTHOR PICK: The Watermill, Faralya, ☎ 0252-6421245, www.responsibletravel.com. This restored watermill epitomizes seclusion. It is difficult to imagine how the German and Turkish owners ever discovered this place hidden in the mountains near the hamlet of Faralya. Rooms are spread over different levels and connected by small paths shaded by trees and flowers. Organic food and wine are served at the six-course dinner. You can join yoga sessions or take a trek along the Lycian Way or one of the paths marked by the owners. $$

GÖCEK

A&B Home Hotel, Turgut Özal Caddesi, ☎ 0252-6451820, www.abhomehotel.com, birkan@abhomehotel. com. Rooms are pretty and functional at this small hotel, which is a perfect place to stay if you plan to sail from Göcek harbor. There is a swimming pool and a well-stocked café-bar. $$

KALKAN

Celik Pansiyon, Yaliboyu Mahallesi 9, ☎ 0242-8442126, is a pretty, old house whose rooms have bathrooms and the promise of constant hot water. The roof terrace is not inspiring, but the views definitely are. $

AUTHOR PICK: Villa Mahal, two km/1.2 miles from Kalkan town center, ☎ 0242-8443268, www.villamahal.com, villamahal@turk.net. This 10-room hotel and its beach club cover a steep hillside overlooking the harbor in Kalkan. Each room has a private terrace from which sliding glass doors open directly on to spacious bedrooms, giving the hotel an air of the Caribbean. Two suites – the Cliff House and the Beach House – have their own swimming pools. The rest of the guests can console themselves with the infinity pool overhanging the Mediterranean Sea. The hotel is pristine and service from the owners and their team is professional and relaxed. Villa Mahal is possibly the most divine hotel in the Mediterranean. $$$$

KAS

Aqua Princess, Kücükcakil Mevkii, Hukumet Caddesi 71, ☎ 0242-8362026, www.aquaprincess.com, sits at the end of a small pebble beach with its own stretch of rock where you can sunbathe and swim. There is a swimming pool and bar. The staff is extremely friendly. $$

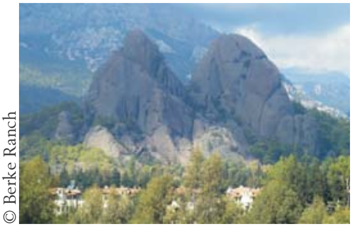
Hadrian Hotel, Cukurbag Yarimadasi, ☎ 0242-8362856, www.hotel-hadrian.de. Whitewashed and covered in bougainvillea, the Hadrian is built to resemble traditional Kaş houses. It occupies a stunning position on the rapidly developing peninsula. Its pool looks out on to the turquoise sea. Rooms are on a half-board basis. $$$

© Hadrian Hotel

Oreo Hotel, Yaka Mahallesi, ☎ 0242-8362220, www.bougainville-turkey.com. This hotel was completely refurbished last year. Its 30 rooms are clean and simple, with balconies. There is a large swimming pool as well as a children's pool. Oreo Hotel is located close to the bus station and within walking distance of the town center. $

KEMER

Berke Ranch, Akcasaz Mevkii 186, Camyuva, ☎ 0242-8180333, www.hotel-berkeranch.com, is an attractive-ranch at the foot of Tahtali Mountain, the second-highest peak in the Taurus range. The rooms are a good standard with Princess-and-the-Pea beds. The emphasis is on activities, with tennis, basketball, volleyball and soccer all offered. The ranch also runs a horseback riding school. $$


© Berke Ranch

MARMARIS

Golden Key Bordubet, Bordubet, ☎ 0252-4369230, www.goldenkeyhotels.com, bordubet@goldenkeyhotels.com. Tucked away in tropical gardens with a river running through it, the Bordubet is as far from big-resort Marmaris as it is possible to be. It consists of nine bungalows and four bars, so you are guaranteed great service. A boat runs from the hotel to the private beach. $$$$

© Golden Key Hotels

Interyouth Hostel, Tepe Mahallesi, 42 Sokak 45, Marmaris, ☎ 0252-4123687, interyouth@turk.net. A centrally located youth hostel with dorms and private rooms. There is a lounge and bar. Washing machines, safety deposit boxes and luggage storage are available. $

Villa Julia, Kizilyer Mahallesi, Soğut Koyu, ☎ 0252-4965001, www.sailingandvillaholidays.com, sailandvilla@aol.com. This homely, six-room guesthouse is the place for low-key lazing. There is a private cove with a picture-book wooden jetty going out into the sea. $$$

AUTHOR PICK: Villa Florya, Kumlubuk beach, ☎ 0252-4767553. A hairy 16-km/10-mile drive over the mountains leads into Kumlubuk beach, a three-km/two-mile stretch of dark sand that is an unspoilt retreat. The hotel is built over a series of terraces giving wonderful views of the bay. Rooms are bright and have private bathrooms; some feature rustic stone fireplaces. $$$

OLYMPOS

The Arkadas Hotel, Cavus Bay, near Olympos, ☎ 0242-8831175, www.cavusturkey.com. A pretty 22-room hotel with an awe-inspiring mountain backdrop, the Arkadas has been completely refurbished and has a new pool. Turkish and European BBQs are available most nights. $$

© Arkadas Hotel

Emin Pansiyon, Çirali, ☎ 0242-8257155, www.eminpansiyon.com, eminpansiyon@e-kolay.net, has 22 bungalows in a spacious garden crammed with roses, orange and lemon trees. There is good home cooking in the restaurant, which is a stone's throw from the beach. The hospitality of the family who own the pension is second-to-none. $

AUTHOR PICK: Olympos Lodge, Çirali, ☎ 0242-8257171, www.olympos lodge.com.tr, is pure elegance. It is built within a dense garden, full of secret hideaways, on the best stretch of Çirali Beach, next to the ruins of Olympos. Twelve rooms are dotted around the garden and decorated with pale wooden furniture and soft white fabrics. Peacocks wander around the lawn. $$$

© Olympos Lodge

AUTHOR PICK: Turkmen Tree Houses, Oympos, ☎ 0242-8921249, www.olymposturkmentreehouses.com. Anyone who spent their childhood dreaming of being able to sleep in a tree house can fulfill that wish at Turkmen. A genuine back-to-nature approach includes rickety tree houses and wooden cabins next to the riverbank near the beach. The cabins have private showers. Dinner is a grand affair with a huge buffet. $

© Turkmen Tree Houses

SIDE

Lotus Hotel, Yali Mahallesi, 1003 Sokak 6, ☎ 0242-7535383, www.lotus-motel.com, is a family-run hotel close to the bus station and within walking distance of the ruins. It provides a welcome escape from the incessant baiting of shop and restaurant owners in the center of town. All rooms have a private bathroom, air conditioning and satellite TV. There is a small swimming pool. Home-cooked Turkish food is served in the restaurant against a backdrop of blues music. $

WHERE TO EAT

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

NOTE: *Along the coast, not all restaurants are open outside the busy summer season. I have noted those that stay open all year.*

ADANA

Adana Beyman Café, Ziya Paşa Bulvari 23, Seyhan, ☎ 0322-4561800. This outlet of the Divan Patisserie chain sells scrumptious cakes and croissants. $

Yuzevler Kebapcisi, Ziya Paşa Bulvari, ☎ 0322-4547513. This kebab house is an institution in Adana. Alcoholic drinks are not served to single men. $$

ALANYA

Blue Parrot Café Bistro, Hotel Grand Kaptan Yani Tosmur Beldesi, ☎ 0242-5284709, www.blueparrotcafebar.net, is a laid-back restaurant on the edge of Bougainvillea Beach. It offers a wide selection of pizza that's cooked in a wood-burning oven, as well as steaks and sandwiches with chunky fries. $$

Eski Ev, Damlatas Caddesi 44, ☎ 0242-5116054, caglarisozen@mynet.com, is set in the garden of a beautiful house. The sign on the door reads: "We do not sell spaghetti or tours." The owner shops daily for the ingredients and cooks it himself. Lunch is a selection of vegetarian dishes and there is a set evening menu according to whatever is available fresh that day. $$

La Bomonti, Iskele Caddesi, Çarşi Mahallesi 47, ☎ 0242-5193737. This café-bar has a prime position overlooking the harbor and Red Tower. It serves coffee, alcoholic drinks and fast food. $$

Lilia Balik Evi, Saray Mahallesi, Damlatas Caddesi, ☎ 0242-5116633, is a stylish fish restaurant close to Kleopatra Beach. Good wine menu. $$$

Momo, Iskele Caddesi 68/1, ☎ 0242-5194365, is a delightful café with easy chairs, board games and a huge selection of music. Black and white photographs of Turkey cover the walls. The owner, Edith, serves a range of coffee, snacks and wine from breakfast until the early hours. $$

Once Ozsut, Çarşi Mahallesi, Iskele Caddesi 84, ☎ 0242-5122202. Carrot cake, ice cream and pastries are on offer at this popular café. You can top off your sugar fix with a good cappuccino. $

Ottoman House, Damlatas Caddesi 31, ☎ 0242-5111421. The whitewashed house was the first hotel to open in Alanya a century ago. It was turned into a restaurant in 1994 and has been decorated in traditional style and has an Ottoman menu. Live music. $$

Ravza Lahmacun Salonu, Ziraat Bankasi Yani 16, ☎ 0242-5133983, serves inexpensive Turkish pizza. $

ANTAKYA

Saray Caddesi is a small, bustling street of restaurants and cafés.

Antakya Evi, Silahli Kuvvetler Caddesi 3, ☎ 0326-2141350. Homemade local dishes are served all day at this Antakya institution. $$

Sultan Sofrasi, Istiklal Caddesi, Otogar Yolu, ☎ 0326-2138759, www.sultansofrasi.com, serves absolutely scrumptious homemade dishes. The Turkish-Arab menu changes daily. $$

Anadolu Restaurant, Saray Caddesi 30, ☎ 0326-2153335. A two-storey restaurant with a huge selection of *mezes* and grills. $$

© Sultan Sofrasi

ANTALYA

Degusta, Isik Caddesi 8, ☎ 0242-3121092. This beach club has six restaurants, including a fish house, steak house and an Italian restaurant. There are kosher and children's menus. $$$

Green Point, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 54/A, ☎ 0242-2434658. An Internet café serving delicious cakes, pizza and Turkish pastry. $

Italiano Pizza Café, Hizir Reis Caddesi 1, ☎ 0242-2470217, has tasty pizzas and cheerful service. $

Mavi Karga, Isiklar Caddesi 28/C, ☎ 0242-2487787. With its dark wood interior and dimmed lighting, Mavi Karga has the look of a tasteful restaurant. Its steaks and casseroles come at café prices. $$

Otantik, Isiklar Caddesi and outlets across the city, ☎ 0242-2445472, is one of a chain of cafés serving baked potatoes, salad and pizza. Take out or eat in. $

Paşa Bey Kebapcisi, 1391 Sokak 4, Isiklar Caddesi, ☎ 0242-2449690, offers traditional kebabs and grills to eat in or take away. $

Rosemary's Patisserie, Konyaalti Caddesi 46, ☎ 0242-2436732, is the place to come for fabulous pastries, cakes and ice cream. $

Stella's Café, Fevzi Cakmak Caddesi 3C, ☎ 0242-2486920. The décor is stylish and minimalist, and the food is equally contemporary. There is a continental European menu and good wine list. $$$

Yagmur Tanesi, Kocatepe Sokak 28, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0242-2489163. With just a couple of orange benches outside and a few more inside, this café is certainly intimate. There is no menu, just a house special cooked in front of you. $

DALYAN

© Caretta Caretta Restaurant

Caretta Caretta Restaurant & Café Bar, Maras Mahallesi, Maras Caddesi 124, ☎ 0252-2843039, www.carettacaretta.net. There are lots of restaurants in Dalyan that line the inlet to the lake. This one also has a terrace with views across to the rock tombs on the opposite bank. Fish and steaks are served with a good selection of wines. $$

Safran Restaurant, Maras Caddesi, ☎ 0252-2845342. Safran offers an eclectic mix of pasta, steaks, fish and Turkish cooking in its lakeside restaurant. There is a pretty garden and deck. $$

FETHIYE & ÖLÜDENIZ

Buzz Beach Bar & Seafood Grill, on the beach in Ölüdeniz, ☎ 0252-6170526, www.buzzbeachbar.com, is a laid-back beach bar with huge comfy seats where you can watch the hoards of paragliders descending on to the sand. It opens at 9am for breakfast and serves a choice of steaks, fish and kebabs for lunch and dinner. Upstairs, there is a terrace bar. $$$

Café Ole, 38 Sokak 4, Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6129532, atillaoyuklu@yahoo.com, has a wide selection of homemade cakes, pancakes and toasted sandwiches as well as pasta dishes. Let the devil in you decide whether to try the juice bar or the alcoholic bar. There is free wireless Internet access. $$

La Serenata, Paspatur, Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6149507. This unassuming Italian restaurant serves delicious pizza and generous portions of pasta. The ravioli is particularly good. $$

Megri Lokantasi, Çarşi Caddesi, Paspatur Mevkii 26, Fethiye, ☎ 0252-6144047, www.megrirestaurant.com, has two restaurants in the old town, with tables spilling out in the street. The menu at both consists of traditional Turkish *mezes*, tasty kebabs and casseroles, as well as a steaks and vegetarian dishes. $$

MEGRI RESTAURANT

© Megri Lokantasi

Paşa Kebab, Çarşi Caddesi 42, ☎ 0252-6149807, www.pasakebap.com, is located on a back road leading out of Paspatur. It has cheap and tasty *pide* (pizza), kebabs and salads. $

KALKAN

Aubergine Restaurant, ☎ 0242-8443332, is wonderfully positioned on a terrace with stunning views over the harbor. The Turkish and international cuisine is of a high standard. $$$

KAS

Bahçe Restaurant, Anit Mezar Karsisi 31, ☎ 0242-8362370. This garden restaurant is famous for its huge *mezes*, purported to be the best in town. It is a particularly good spot for vegetarians. $$

Chez Evy, Terzi Sokak 4, ☎ 0242-8361253. If you are in the mood for classy French food, then Evy's is the place to go. The small dining room is brimming with an eclectic hoard of antiques. There is also a delightful garden restaurant. Evy has had an acclaimed gastronomic career and has chosen to settle in sleepy Kaş. Portions are generous, so make sure you are hungry. $$$

Eris Restaurant, Cumhuriyet Meydani, Uzun Çarşi Caddesi, ☎ 0242-8361057, has tables set on a cobbled stone terrace in the center of the town surrounded by trees. The extensive menu of homemade Turkish dishes means the restaurant is always busy with locals and tourists alike. $$

SIDE

Aphrodite Restaurant, the harbor, ☎ 0242-7531171, is a quality fish eatery run by a friendly crew with none of the typical traps that haunt the busy tourist resort. $$

Chilis Mexican Restaurant, Liman Caddesi, Sur Motel, ☎ 0242-7531087, www.side-chilis.com. If you crave your fix of spicy fajitas while on the road, you will do well to try Chilis. The contemporary restaurant, decorated with cream furnishings and low lighting, is a deviation from typical Side eateries. $$$

Doruk Pastanesi, Yali Mahallesi 17A, ☎ 0242-7535820, offers pizza and hamburgers alongside mouth-watering pastries and cakes. Doruk is a spacious café close to the antique city of Side. $

Gama Restaurant, Selimiye Mahallesi, Barbaros Caddesi, ☎ 0242-7534219. The quirky owners of this fish restaurant (one a cool Turkish man, the other a tattooed, motorcycle-riding giant) make entertaining company. The restaurant has seats overlooking a small beach and a cocktail bar open until the early hours. $$$

Central Anatolia

Central Anatolia is an immense plateau of green and russet steppes encircled by a chain of rugged mountains. The scenery is softened by the many lakes and rivers that meander through its orchards, wheat and barley fields.

This rich agricultural land helped to build the fortunes of both the Roman and Byzantine empires. It also speeded the rise of the Seljuk warriors, who captured the plains and cut off a valuable source of income for the Byzantines. It is, therefore, ironic that the downfall of these early Turks was plotted by a fierce new dynasty that sprang from a nearby enclave of rural Anatolia.

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The history of Central Anatolia pre-dates all of these battles. One of the earliest known settlements in the world (dating from 6800BC) can be found at Çatalhoyuk. It was probably here that man first abandoned hunting and gathering in favor of being a tradesman and farmer. Another remarkable civilization, the Hittite Empire, was established farther north at Boğazkale. Many of the kingdom's relics, such as the giant reliefs of gods carved into rocks, have survived the blistering winds of the Anatolian plains.

The country's most prized artifacts are showcased in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara, among the finest museums in the world and one of the main reasons to visit the capital. From Ankara, head southeast through Konya, the country's most conservative province, to Cappadocia, home to its most wondrous scenery.

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY AIR

Ankara's airport is the gateway to Central Anatolia. International direct flights to **Esenboğa International Airport** (ESB, ☎ 0312-3980000) are improving. **British Airways** now operates direct flights on most days from London Heathrow. Contact BA from the US and Canada at ☎ 800-AIRWAYS, www.ba.com. **Turkish Airlines** (www.turkishairlines.com) operates inexpensive internal flights from Istanbul to Ankara and Konya. Contact them in the US, ☎ 718-751-2600, or in Ankara, ☎ 0312-4280200.

GETTING TO DOWNTOWN ANKARA

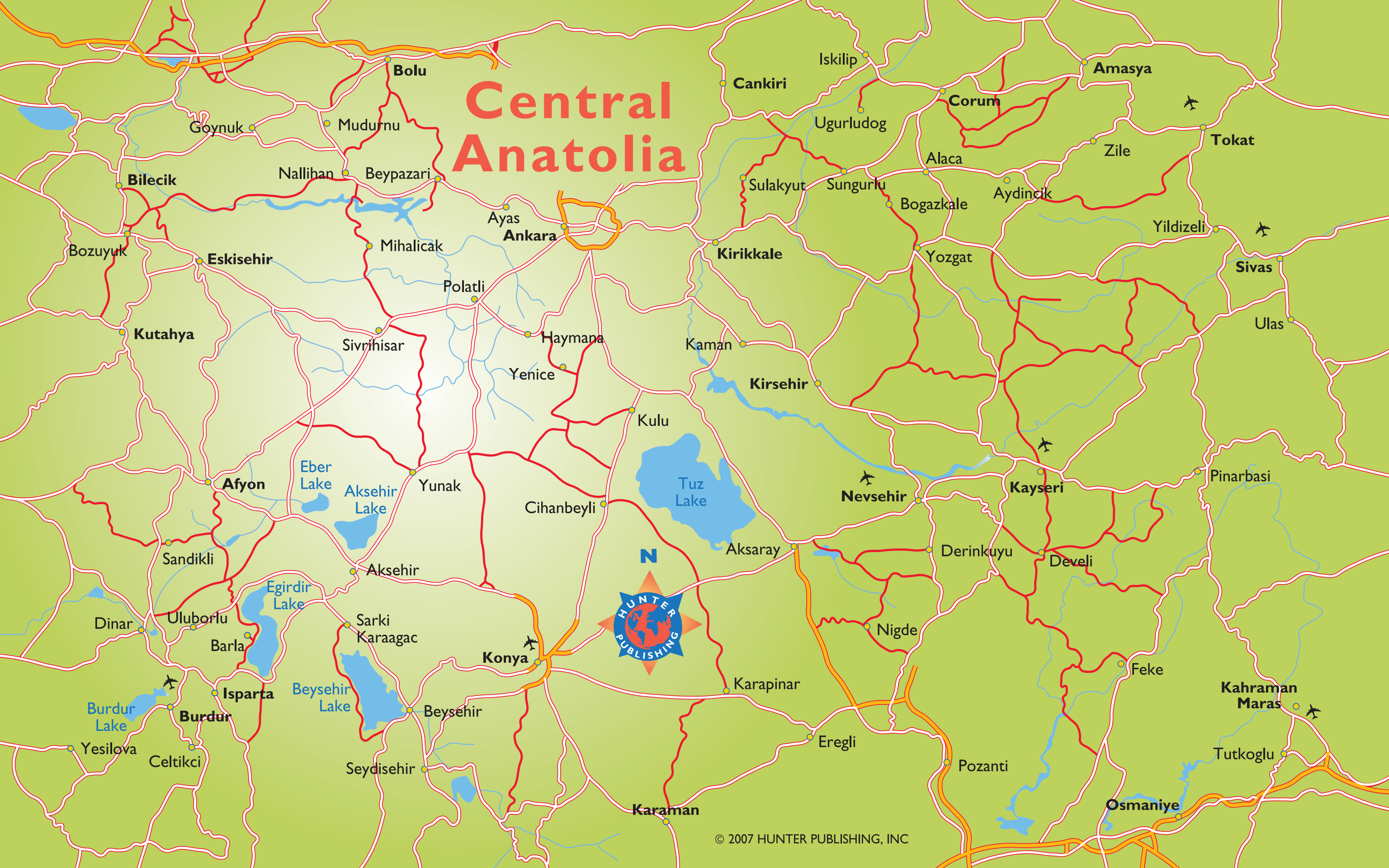
Esenboğa International Airport is 33 km/21 miles north of Ankara. It takes 30 minutes and costs $25-$35 by taxi into the downtown area. Regular **Havaş** buses go from the airport to the Havaş office in Ulus. They stop at the city's main railway and bus stations along the way and operate according to the landing schedules of Turkish Airlines domestic flights. Tickets cost $3.50.

MAJOR ROADS

The **Istanbul-Ankara highway** (E-80 and E-89) is the main route and certainly the busiest. The highway culminates in a ringroad around the city. Traveling onward from Ankara, **E-90** heads south to Adana and Mersin, and west towards Çanakkale. **E-88** is the main route heading east.

To reach Konya from Ankara (258 km/160 miles), take **E-90** south. Continuing west of Konya to the Lake District, **Route 330** is the primary road and this will bring you to Beyşehir Gölü (Lake). If you continue through the Isparta district to Antalya, it is a 400-km/250-mile trip.

To reach Sivas from Ankara, travel due east along **E-88** (442 km/275 miles). The roads in Central Anatolia are often closed because of heavy snow in winter, so plan ahead if you are traveling at this time of year.


Central Anatolia
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Pozanti
Osmaniye

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> **TIP:** *Driving in downtown Ankara makes no sense. The roads are clogged and dominated by one-way streets. Once you find your destination, the odds are that there will be nowhere to park. Abandon the car in favor of buses and the underground.*

BY BUS

Buses connect Ankara to towns and cities all over the country. The enormous **Intercity Bus Station** (ASTI) is about five km/three miles southwest of the city center. It is slightly more downtrodden than you would expect, but it does have cafés serving hot meals and snacks, as well as left luggage facilities.

The city center has an excellent, cheap bus network. Buses are well utilized and can become very crowded at peak times. There are two types of bus. Those run by the Municipality, **Belediye Otobüsü**, which are red or green, require electronic tickets that must be bought in advance from ticket booths. The privately run **Halk Otobüsü**, which are blue, accept cash.

Beyond Ankara, intercity buses run from ASTI to Konya (five hours), northwest and southwest Anatolia. Konya's modern bus station is 20 minutes outside of the city. You can pick up one of the regular *dolmus* buses from a road off to the right from the *otogar*. You will be able to see the line of blue and white buses lined up. To reach the main sites in the city, ask for the bus to Mevlana. A tram also operates from behind the bus station into the city center. It is more comfortable, but slower than the *dolmus*. They both cost less than $1. The bus to Sivas from Ankara takes seven hours.

BY TRAIN

Ankara's main train station (☎ 0312-3090515) is located on Mayis Caddesi, southwest of Gençlik Parki. There are many services daily to **Ankara** from Istanbul's Haydarpaşa train station. These trains are the best in Turkey, with air conditioning and dining cars serving cheap meals and drinks. The *Ankara Express*, though not speedy, is a good sleeper service departing Istanbul at 10:30pm and arriving in Ankara at 8:04am the next day. The fare is $7 for a seat or $44 for a single-berth sleeper room. Trains are usually busy, so it is advisable to book tickets in advance.

In Ankara, suburban trains leave from **Sincan**, a district on the west of the city, to **Kayas**, east of the city. Suburban trains are a good way of beating the traffic in and out of Ankara. They are cheap and efficient, although their low fares mean they are often packed with locals. Tickets can be purchased at train stations.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Atakule, the modern face of Ankara

Trains also depart daily from Istanbul to **Konya**. The overnight Meram train departs from Istanbul's Haydarpaşa station daily at 7:20pm and arrives in Konya at 8:21am. The daily overnight *Icanadolou Mavi Tren* departs from Haydarpaşa at 11:50pm and arrives into Konya at 12:30pm. The trains also stop in Afyon and Eskişehir. A single-berth sleeper room costs $40 one way; a Pullman seat costs $15 one way. New high-speed train lines are being constructed between Istanbul, Ankara and Konya. These will massively cut the traveling time once they open in 2007.

To reach **Sivas** by train, the most useful service is the *Eylul Mavi Tren* that runs between Ankara and Malatya. It departs Ankara at 7:55pm and arrives in Sivas at 6:37am, so you can sleep almost the length of the journey. A standard ticket costs $11 and a sleeper costs $14.

> **TIP:** *It is cheaper to buy return tickets on the underground, suburban trains and buses rather than two single tickets.*

THE METRO (METRO-ANKARAY METRO)

The city's underground has two routes: **Ankaray** (Light Metro) and **Metro**. They are both surprisingly clean and speedy. The two lines connect in Kizilay. Electronic bus tickets are valid on the service, making it easy to get around. You can buy single and return tickets from booths in the underground stations.

© AtilimGunesBeydin

Kizilay Station

The Metro runs from Batikent, north of the city, to Kizilay. The Ankaray line runs from ASTI, west of town, passing through Kizilay to Cebeci. A map of the routes and electronic cards can be obtained from any underground station. The Metro runs from 6am until midnight.

TAXIS & *DOLMUS*

Yellow taxis are everywhere in Ankara, as they are in all Turkish cities. Be sure that the meter is on day rate, or *günduz*, from 6am until midnight. The meter should read night rate, or *gece*, between midnight and 6am.

A *dolmus* service (shared taxi) is widely available in Ankara and connects routes not covered by city buses. The main hop-on points are Ulus and on the bridge above Atatürk Bulvari at Sihhiye.

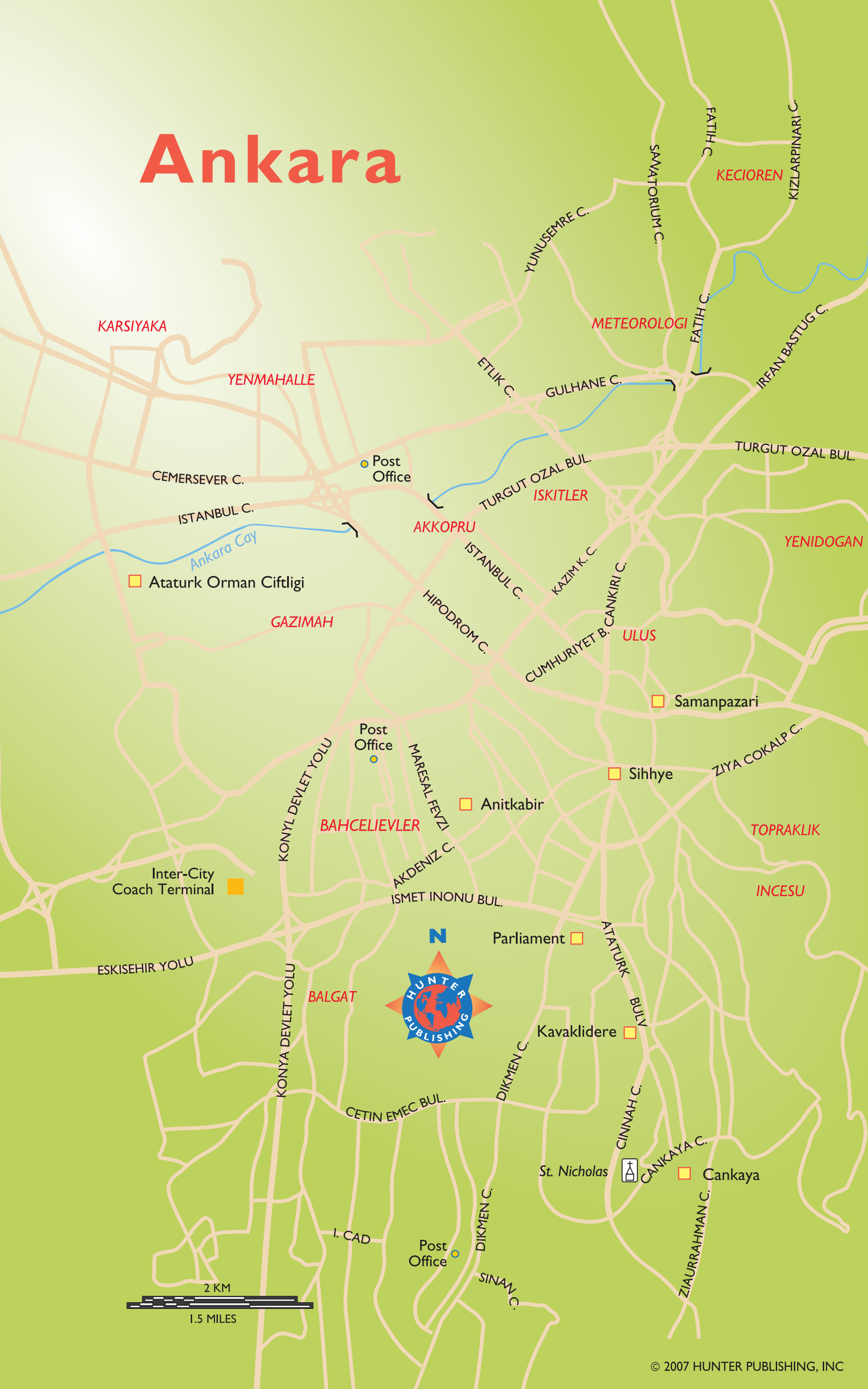
Outside of Ankara, *dolmuses* run to almost every enclave. Generally, villages across the region are poor and locals rely on this cheap transport.

SIGHTSEEING

SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (★) are worth a visit. Two stars (★★) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (★★★), just do it. You won't be sorry.

Ankara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ANKARA

HISTORY

The turbulent history of this strategic expanse of land goes back to the Bronze Age. The doors of sovereignty have been opened and closed for the Hittites, Phrygians, Lydians and the Persians. When Alexander the Great defeated the Persians in 334 BC, Ankara came under his rule.

In 266 BC, the Galatians, a Celtic race, made Ankara their capital. It was then known as Ancyra, meaning anchor. The Romans and then the Byzantines held it until 1073 when the Seljuk Turks, led by Alparslan, annexed it. The Ottomans took it in 1354 before losing it to the Mongols in 1402. They regained the region 29 years later. By this time, Ankara was an important town on the caravan route along the Silk Road before it fell into decline in the 19th century.

After the First World War, Angora, as it was known, became the center of Turkish national resistance. On the 13th of October 1923, Atatürk chose this landlocked town, on an intersection of ancient trade routes, as his capital. Seven years later, the city was renamed Ankara.

Kizilay Business Center

Ankara is not the country's most stirring city. It is an ever-expanding playground for bureaucrats and businessmen. Travelers have to search for architectural gems amid insipid tower blocks. In the old districts around the Citadel are shabby migrants' houses lost amid the rush to transform the once-dusty town into a modern capital.

Alongside Istanbul, Ankara was at the forefront of Atatürk's cultural reforms. His mark can be seen in the wide boulevards and public parks, and the many theaters and orchestras.

The city could hold a traveler for five days or it could be sprinted around in just one day. If you are pressed for time, plan to visit the Anitkabir, the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations and the Citadel.

ON THE TRAIL OF ATATÜRK

To appreciate Turkey you have to understand Atatürk. There is no better place to get to know the founder of the Turkish Republic than in Ankara. Ironically, it is Atatürk's final resting place that gives the greatest insight. **Atatürk's Mausoleum** sits high on a hill in the Aniteppe district west of Ankara, a spot that was chosen because it can be seen from all over the city. The sand-colored marble mausoleum took nine years to build and is a beautiful, serene piece of architecture. The walkway leading to it is lined with sleeping lions symbolizing the strength and peacefulness of modern Turkey.

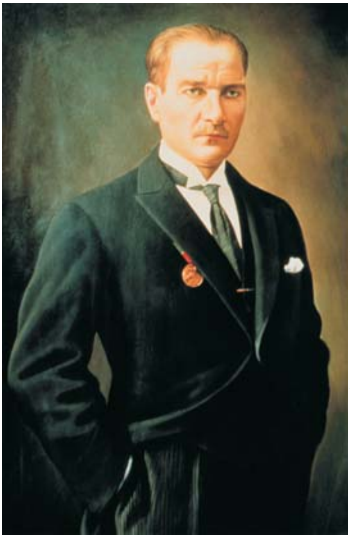


Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Atatürk, father of the nation

© ProhibitOnions

The mausoleum itself has several inscriptions, including a message from Atatürk to his army and one from Inönü, Atatürk's best friend and the country's second president, dedicated to his comrade.

Atatürk's coffin was moved from its temporary burial site in the Ethnographical Museum to the Anitkabir when it was completed in 1953. His grave room is more than seven m/23 feet below the red stone tomb on display in the mausoleum. Every region of Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus contributed material to the grave room. Inönü's tomb has lay in the grounds of the Anitkabir since he died in 1973.

After visiting the mausoleum, take a couple of hours to walk around the excellent **museum** on the site (open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-4pm; entrance fee). It has an exhaustive collection of Atatürk's personal effects, including identification cards, medals, uniforms, jewelry, guns and daggers, some of which were presents from foreign leaders. Scenes from the famous battles at Gallipoli, Izmir and Sakarya are brought to life within the museum and there are some poignant photographs of significant events within Atatürk's life. The final section of the museum has more than 3,200 of his books in Ottoman, German and French.

© Helen P Betts

The mausoleum (Anit Caddesi, Tandogan, ☎ 0312-2317975; open daily 9am-5pm, closes at 4pm in winter; free) is the first place official visitors to the city go to pay their respects to Atatürk. It should be at the top of every visitor's itinerary.

Afterwards, make your way to **Atatürk's House** (open Sundays, religious and national holidays 9am-5pm; entrance fee), situated in the grounds of the Presidential Palace in Çankaya, at the far end of Atatürk Bulvari. Atatürk lived here during the 1920s when it was still a remote spot on the outskirts of the town. Many of his personal items are on display.

BIRTH OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Your next trip should be to **Ulus**, the first district to be built after Ankara became the capital. Ulus is the most culturally colorful and yet the most downtrodden district with dreary streets and brightly painted shanty houses. **Ulus Meydani**, the main square, features a statue of Atatürk on horseback amid crowds and street peddlers.

Across the road from Ulus Meydani in the opposite direction to the Citadel is the **Museum of the War of Independence** (Cumhuriyet Caddesi, ☎ 0312-3110473; open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee). This modest building was the first parliament seat of the Grand National Assembly. The rooms are set out as they were during Atatürk's government and more closely resemble a 19th-century classroom than a government building. There is a collection of official documents, arms and the flag hoisted at the birth of the Republic.

About 100 m/330 feet away on the corner of the same street is the **Museum of the Republic** (Atatürk Bulvari; open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) housed in the second parliament building. The interior is a mix of Seljuk and Ottoman. The exhibits in the museum tell the story of the early Republican period.

> **TIP FOR WOMEN:** *Women should be careful when asking directions. Seek help from other women or shopkeepers. Asking men in the street may cause them to think they have a new girlfriend. Wearing a ring on your wedding finger helps to fend off unwanted attention.*

ROMAN MONUMENTS

Staying in Ulus, you can pay a visit to the **Temple of Augustus**, the most prominent of the few remaining Roman monuments in the capital. The temple, situated about 100 m/330 feet before Ulus Meydani, has a checkered history. It was built on the site of a Phrygians temple to the deities Men and Cybele. The temple was dedicated to Augustus. The Byzantines turned the temple into a church in the fourth century.

Close by is the 15-m/50-foot **Column of Julian** (shown at right), erected in 362AD to commemorate Emperor Julian's visit to Ankara. The remains of a Roman Bath built during the reign of Caracalla can be seen on Çankiri Caddesi.

THE CITADEL

Walk uphill from Ulus Meydani to the steps that lead to the citadel. It is quite a climb to the top for views over the concrete metropolis. The foundations of the

© Stephan Garcia

citadel were built by the Galatians and completed by the Romans. The Byzantines and Seljuk Turks also made additions.

The walls of the citadel themselves are not impressive, but the crumbling village within its walls is enchanting. Life there is untouched by Atatürk's revolution. Children play in the alleyways while women in traditional dress sit in the courtyards of dilapidated Ottoman houses. From the top of the citadel there is a commanding view of blue, mauve and yellow shanty houses clinging to a nearby hillside. These were built as temporary solution to migrants moving from rural Turkey to the city in search of a better life. The houses have become permanent fixtures and are sad reminders of their inhabitants' unfulfilled dreams. They make a startling contrast to contemporary Ankara with its high-rise blocks and deluxe shopping malls.

Parts of the citadel have been revitalized. Private capital has transformed old houses into smart guesthouses, restaurants and museums. A good example is the **Rahmi M. Koç Museum** in the beautifully restored **Çengelhan**, a merchants' inn across the square from the citadel's main gate. After being abandoned in the late 1990s, it now houses a collection of transport and communication-themed toys.

Follow the city walls west to the 12th-century **Aladdin Camii** with its walnut carved mihrab. The mosque is one of the oldest Muslim buildings in the city. Farther along near the main citadel gate is the Aslanhane Camii with its fragments of blue Iznik tiles.

> *If you want a keepsake, look for an old woman wandering around the Citadel selling Evil Eye charms and bracelets for a couple of dollars.*

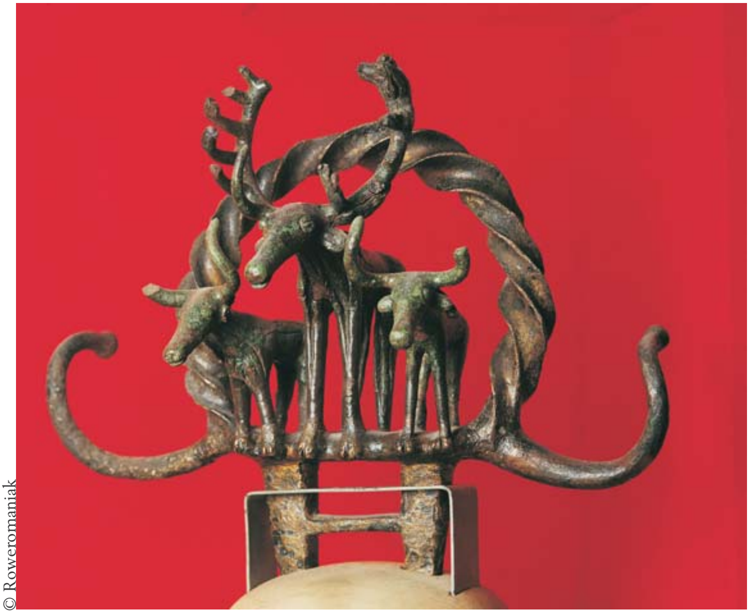
MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILIZATIONS ☆☆☆

MÜZELER HAFTASI
18-24 MAYIS

© Roweromaniak

Museum courtyard

The museum is among the best in Europe and is renowned for its astounding documentation of the civilizations that have passed through Anatolia. Even the building itself – an amalgamation of a 15th-century bedesten where expensive cloths were sold, and an inn built to provide revenue for a soup kitchen – is worth a look. It is located just outside the gates of the citadel in an area known as Atpazari, or Horse Market (Hisar Caddesi, Ulus, ☎ 0312-3243160; open daily 8:30am-5:30pm in summer, Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-5pm in winter; entrance fee).


© Roweromaniak

Ancient relic, one of many on display at Turkey's finest museum

The collection is well organized, passing from Palaeolithic to Neolithic and Çatalhoyuk periods. The middle section shows exhibits from the Early Bronze Age, Hittite, Phrygian, Urartian, Lydian and Byzantine periods. Finally, displays move to the Turkish age. Exhibits in the Palaeolithic Age include tools made of stone and bones found at Karain Cave near Antalya. Next, there is a reconstruction of a cave sanctuary at Çatalhoyuk, which has murals on a cave wall showing paintings of bulls' heads, stick-figure humans and leopards. The cave excavations have revealed many cave paintings of hunters as well as scenes of dancing and music believed to be part of a religious ritual.

The most interesting items in the gallery are the sculptures of the mother goddess with her huge breasts, legs, arms and belly. Throughout history in Turkey, large woman have been considered beautiful.

Image courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Bronze Age jewelry and pots

Next, enter the gallery of Bronze Age tools where there is a wealth of animal sculptures, bowls, goblets, tools and jewelry made of copper, lead, silver, bronze, tin and iron. Some of the most impressive finds came from the 13 royal tombs at Alacahoyuk. Excavations of the tombs revealed females buried with incredibly delicate crowns and necklaces and men with their weapons.

The museum's extensive collection of relics from the lost civilization of the Hittites includes a giant relief of a Hittite war god in his traditional kilt and conical hat taken from a gate at the Hittite capital of Hattusa, east of Ankara. The Phrygian works were discovered in the tombs of King Midas during excavations at Gordion. These include metal cauldrons and bowls and terra cotta pottery. There was no gold. The most interesting exhibit in the Greek and Roman section is a gold and silver coin collection with the centerpiece being the world's first coin. It dates from 615 BC.

Wandering down the slopes from the museum of Anatolian Civilizations back to the foot of the citadel in Ulus you will come to **Salman Sokak**, a tangle of craftsmen's shops known as **Copper Alley**. It is something of a tourist attraction now, though there are still bargains to be had for those in the market for copper bowls, jugs and other curios.

"Young Turk" refers to a group of intellectuals who opposed the Ottoman ruling class in late 1800s and demanded a parliament to voice and enforce the will of the people.

KIZILAY

The **Museum of Ethnography** (Talat Pasha Bulvari, Ulku Sokak 4, Opera (open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-12:30pm, 1:30pm-5:30pm; closes at 5pm in winter; entrance fee), in a white marble building on a hill behind Atatürk Bulvari, uses waxwork models to bring Turkish culture to life. The displays show the art of carpet making, woodworking, calligraphy and the importance of jewelry in Turkish society. The entrance hall has a commemorative plaque to Ataturk, whose body lay there for 15 years until it was moved to the permanent mausoleum in 1953.

Next door is the **Museum of Painting and Sculpture** (Talat Pasha Bulvari, Ulku Sokak, ☎ 0312-90-3102094; open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee). Set within an equally beautiful building, it houses a collection of Turkish art from the 19th century onward.

From here, head south to **Kocatepe Camii**, built to resemble Istanbul's magnificent Blue Mosque. After an arduous 20 years of construction, the architects fell short of achieving their aim. It is flanked by a busy road (Mithatpasa Caddesi) and has a dowdy shopping mall underneath it.

© Noumenon

Kocatepe Camii

TIP: *Ankara can be confusing to get around once you wander off the main tourist trail. Use* ***Atatürk Bulvari*** *to get your bearings. The wide boulevard connects Ulus in the north with Çankaya in the south, passing through Kizilay on the way. You can walk the length of the boulevard in an hour.*

ANKARA'S SWANKY SUBURBS

The city's wealth is evident in the boutiques, hotels, restaurants and town houses in the southern districts of Çankaya, Kavaklidere and Gasiosmanpaşa. Here, the emphasis is on shopping and eating well.

Up until the 1950s, Kavaklidere and Çankaya were covered in vineyards, lending their names to two of the country's most popular wine brands. They were slowly transformed into exclusive residential and shopping districts.

Atakule Tower

The Atakule (☎ 0312-4407412, www.atakule.com; open daily; observation deck entrance fee; free for customers who have a reservation in one of the restaurants) is fast becoming the symbol of modern Ankara. The glass and steel tower gives 360-degree views of the city from its observation deck more than 100 m/330 feet high. This is the best way to get orientated with the city while contemplating its rapid expansion. If you need to be even higher, try the revolving restaurant at the top.

The ground floor of the Atakule features arcade amusements and a cinema. The complex is set in the pretty Botanical Gardens. It is best to head to the Atakule on a Sunday so you can stop at nearby Atatürk's House.

PARKS

Ankara has a surprising amount of green space both in the center and the surrounding areas for getting on a bike or for lazing over a picnic. **Harikalar Diyari** (Ayas Road, off the Istanbul highway, www.harikalardiyari.com.tr), known as Wonderland, is among the biggest and considered one of the best urban parks in Europe. Its attractions include three ponds, a go-kart track, bicycle and jogging routes and tennis and volleyball courts. If you have children, visit Fairy Tale Island, a fantasyland with 12 movie theaters showing children's films and animation characters wandering around. A mini-train can take you around the park.

Altinpark (www.altinpark.com, Turkish-language only), on the way to the airport, has just about everything. There is an enormous playground for children, go-kart and running tracks open until late, an Olympic-size swimming pool and a boat lake. You can even learn to horseback ride.

Kurtulus Park

Gençlik Parki, behind the opera and ballet theater, has a fairground and an artificial lake for boating. **Kurtuluş Parki**, east of Atatürk Bulvari on Cemal Gürsel Caddesi, is set around a small lake. There is a running track and soccer pitches. **Seğmenler Parki** is a small, lush park in the Kavaklidere district. It is a lovely detour on the way to the Presidential Palace.

Gölbaşi Lake, 25 km/16 miles south of Ankara on the road to Konya, is a beautiful lake surrounded by parkland. Another favorite picnic spot for Ankara residents is **Incek**, 15 km/nine miles southwest of the city center.

CHILDREN'S ANKARA

The **Toy Museum** (at Ankara University in Cebeci; open Monday to Friday; call ahead to arrange a tour; free) has collections of toys from the famous toy museum in Ergup and from other regions in Turkey. It is wonderful for young children and small enough to hold their attention.

To reach **Atatürk Orman Ciftligi** (Atatürk Farm and Zoo; open daily 8:30am-7pm in summer, closes at 4:30pm in winter; entrance fee), take the train from Ankara or Yenisehir stations to Gazi station. The park has a small zoo with many of the usual occupants and also horseback riding.

Altinpark's **Skate Palace** indoor rink (www.altinpark.com, Turkish-language only) has skating for all levels with trainers available. Ice-skating lessons are also available at **Kurtuluş Parki** (Cemal Gürsel Caddesi; open 9am-8pm).

If you prefer to be indoors, **Bilkent Rollhouse** (Bilkent Ankuva Is Merkezi 1, Bilkent, ☎ 0312-2661240, www.rollhouse.com) has a 24-lane bowling alley, billiard tables and a darts hall.

Café Down (Atatürk Bulvari 76, Kizilay, ☎ 0312-4258250) is run by children with physical and mental handicaps. The children were trained to become waiters and to work behind the stands.

> **RAINY DAY TIP:** *The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations is an inexpensive way to entertain children for an entire wet day.*

Baypazari, a village with much charm and few tourists (© Samantha Lafferty)

NORTHWEST ANATOLIA

Travelers who want to see genuine Anatolian villages – rather than ones that have been turned into tourist-friendly snapshots of what they used to be – should spend some time exploring Northwest Anatolia.

Your first stop heading west out of Ankara along Route 140 should be **Beypazari** (100 km/62 miles), a chocolate-box village of half-timber houses. The town is a miniature replica of Safranbolu with remarkably few tourists. Antique shops are dotted around the steep lanes and there are several good restaurants. One of the Ottoman houses has a cute **folklore museum** (open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-5pm) with awe-inspiring views from its creaky wooden balcony. Beypazari can be reached on a day-trip from Ankara on one of the regular, but uncomfortable, *dolmuses* from Ulus.

If you head north from Ankara, there are two routes. One takes you to the wooded spa town of Kizilcahamam, famed for its hot springs, and on to the Black Sea Coast. The other route follows the scenic E-89 highway to Bolu, an unexciting Anatolian town that is not worth a stop unless you need a hotel for the night or to catch a bus to breathtakingly beautiful Yedigöller Milli Parki and Abant Gölü. Southwest Anatolia is better known as Turkey's Lake District, yet Northwest

Anatolia has more than its share of lakes, many of them hidden deep in black-pine and fir forests.

Yedigöller Milli Parki (42 km/26 miles north of Bolu) derives its name from the collection of seven lakes dotted around a forest. The park has good trekking routes and camping facilities. You can even fish for your own trout supper. **Abant Gölü** (34 km/21 miles southwest of Bolu) is a sapphire-colored crater lake shrouded with pines. The lake has a long list of credits as a set for the Turkish film industry. It takes about two hours to walk around the lake or you can take one of the horse-drawn phaeton rides.

Abant Gölü

Buses run from Ankara and Bolu to many of villages in Northwest Anatolia, but it advisable to hire a car. Car hire companies are hard to find in the hills, so plan ahead and rent a car in Istanbul or Ankara. Alternately, buy a bike from **Delta Bisiklet** in Ankara (☎ 0312-2236027, www.deltabisiklet.com) and take a train to **Eskişehir** before cycling around the villages and lakes.

MUDURNU

The mountain road south of Abant Gölü strings together some of Turkey's least touched and most picturesque villages. The drive itself is spectacular, with black-rock mountains jutting out into the narrow road, and streams flowing through seemingly endless forests. The road zigzags through the mountains and varies between asphalt and dirt track. It is a lonely road and the scenery is utter wilderness.

From Abant, head south across the mountains to Mudurnu, where crumbling Ottoman houses and dusty roads are signs that the tourist dollar has yet to reach here. Mountains crowd the village, dousing it in snow in the harsh Anatolian winter. Gothic-looking half-timber houses line either side of the narrow river that slices the village in half. Rickety wooden bridges run across it.

Kanuni Sultan Süleyman mosque, on the far side of the river, has a carved walnut pulpit and a ceiling edged with elaborate paintings.

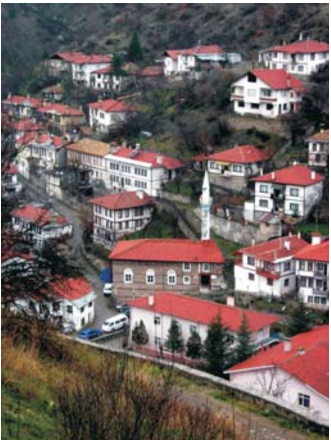
Yildirim Beyazid Camii, which dominates the village center, has an ornate dome. The mosque was originally constructed as a lunatic asylum and theology school. It was rebuilt after a fire destroyed it in 1908. Behind, ramshackle wooden stores are occupied by the village saddlemaker, stovemaker and a host of coppersmiths.

The **Saturday market** – with its smorgasbord of sweets and homemade goodies and the aroma of warm herb bread – is the village's mainstay. You can saunter from one end of Mudurnu to the other in no time, yet its charm will keep you hanging around for longer.

Atatürk Dam is a part of one of the largest public projects in the world. It irrigates an area in southeastern Turkey large enough to feed all of the Middle East.

GÖYNUK ✩

Heading west from Mudurnu, you can take the road north to pike-filled Karamurat Gölü and Sülüklügöl, a lake formed by a landslide 300 years ago. Tree stumps can still be seen in the lake. Or you can continue west to Göynuk, another undiscovered treasure. A left turn halfway between Mudurnu and Göynuk brings you to Sunnet Gölü. The road to the lake is a rough dirt track but it is worth the effort. A solitary hotel, **Doğal Yasam Oteli** (www.sunnetgolu.com), organizes hunting and fishing trips on the lake. Behind the hotel is perhaps the tiniest mosque in the country.



© Samantha Lafferty

Hillside village of Göynuk

The village of Göynuk rises over the curve of a mountain. Beautifully restored black and white Ottoman mansions sit one on top of the other. Visit the **Tomb of Aksemsettin**, the first Muslim teacher to give the call to prayer from the Aya Sofya in 1453 following the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul. A steep path off Ankara Caddesi leads up the mountain to an abandoned tower that acts as a vantage point across the valley.

From Göynuk, a lonely road climbs through the hills to Golpazari, a one-road agricultural hamlet with more tractors than cars. Goats ramble along the street and school children straggle home in their vivid blue uniforms.

THE OTTOMAN HEARTLANDS

The Ottoman dynasty, which ruled the Balkans, Anatolia and much of the Middle East, thundered into the world from the green hills of Sakarya Valley. The village of **Soğut** is the birthplace of the vibrant and enduring empire. The grave room of Ertuğrul Gazi, founding father of the empire, lies below a shrine in a lavishly painted room. Ertuğrul ruled a fiefdom in Soğut. It was his sons, Orhan and Osman, who catapulted this into an empire. The highlight of Soğut is the September festival that commemorates the town's war history. The annual sports event attracts government ministers and other dignitaries. Behind the sports ground is a monument with the busts of all the great leaders in Turkish history.

Just north of Soğut is **Bilecik**, home to a Byzantine castle captured by the first Ottoman war band. There is also a mosque dedicated to Orhan, which has Ottoman grave tombs strewn around its entrance. The surrounding valleys are a jumble of rural idyll and marble factories.

South along E-90 is **Eskişehir**, a city whose name means "old" in Turkish, although little remains of its ancient buildings. Known for its university, air-force base and meerschaum, a soft white stone used for jewelry making and tobacco pipes, Eskişehir is a transport hub with good bus and rail connections. With its meerschaum, archaeology and folklore museums, there is enough to do if you find yourself there for a couple of hours.

KÜTAHYA

Famed for its pottery factories, even Kütahya's *otogar* uses the name Cinigar, China Station. The lifeblood of the town is its thriving **pottery industry**, which furnishes homes of upscale Turks countrywide. Every street has shops selling painted dishes and vases and you can visit factories to see them being crafted.

Kütahya's clock tower

© Starliner

The **castle**, now just a ring of stone pillars on a hill high above the town, shows a collage of a different kind. Green, pink and cream-colored Ottoman houses overhang narrow alleys. Many are under protection from the government and some have been turned into museums. The best houses are on Germyian Sokak, just off Adnan Menderes Bulvari, such as Şeker Konaği, a beautiful 19th-century abode that has been preserved in its traditional style. It also serves as a restaurant (Germyian Sokak, Karadonlu Camii Karsisi, ☎ 0274-2166767).

CERAMIC HISTORY

Ceramic production has been the main industry in Kütahya since the 14th century. It took another 400 years for the town to gain widespread fame. Its potteries produced tiles that adorned Sultans' palaces and mosques, as well as bowls, cups, vases and figurines.

Early designs on Kütahya ceramics were heavily influenced by Iznik pottery, although Iznik tiles were far superior. By the 15th century, the style of Kütahya ceramics was strictly blue and white and the quality improved. At the end of the 16th century, demand for the more expensive Iznik pottery declined and Kütahya potteries began to supersede them.

Today, Kütahya not only has hundreds of small and large potteries producing tiles and ceramic ware, but large porcelain factories mainly producing fine dinner services.

Just south of Germyian Sokak is a quaint **bazaar** around an old stone bedesten marketplace with gold and handicraft shops, and sweet sellers serving *helva*, Turkish delight and heavenly chocolate. Farther south, at the end of Hurriyet Caddesi, are more traditional houses from Ahi Erbasan Sokak stretching west past the Ulu Camii.

Next to the Ulu Camii is the **Archaeology Museum** (☎ 0274-2236213; open everyday, 8:30am-12pm, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) with a collection of Byzantine coins and Roman statues. The **Tile Museum**, (Cini Muzesi; open daily 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee) has a collection of vases, tiles and bowls dating from the 14th century. West of here is the **Kütahya Kossuth Museum**, also known as Hungarian

House (Macar Sokak open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-5pm; entrance fee), a private house where Lajos Kossuth, a leader of the Hungarian freedom movement, stayed while he prepared a draft of the Hungarian constitution. The museum contains some of his belongings alongside classic Turkish furniture.

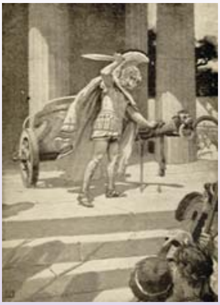
Kütahya's greatest display of ceramic exuberance is on the outside of **Cinili Camii** in the Maltepe district (reached by *dolmus* from outside the Archaeological Museum). The mosque and its nearby fountains are swamped with bright blue tiles in varying designs.

THE TOMB OF KING MIDAS

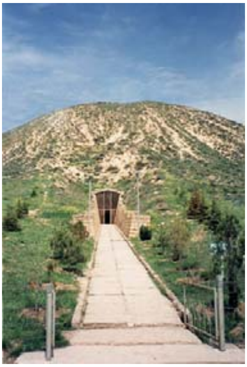
East of Eskişehir, along E-90 toward Ankara, the terrain becomes progressively more barren as you enter the former lair of another of Turkey's great rulers, the Phrygian King Midas. **Polatli** (100 km/330 feet southwest of Ankara) is the principal town and the place to get off the bus or train if you want to explore the cluster of sites. Getting around can be difficult without a car. The best option is to hire a taxi for a couple of hours and haggle over the price. Do not expect too much from the town itself; it is chiefly a tank regiment base.

The mysterious Phrygians swept across Anatolia in the eighth century BC, burning Hittite cities and building their own over the embers. The Phrygians' seat of power encased Central and Western Anatolia from Eskişehir to Ankara and Afyon. Stories of King Midas and his golden touch are believed to be fantasies brought to Greece by travelers from Asia Minor. Midas' short reign began in 738BC. He is said to have committed suicide by drinking bull's blood after tribes from the northeast overthrew the kingdom.

THE GORDIAN KNOT



According to legend, Midas' father, Gordius, made a complex knot and pledged that whoever could untie it would become the ruler of Asia. About 500 years after the death of Gordius, Alexander the Great passed through the capital of Phrygia, which had become known as Gordion. Unable to unravel the knot, he raised his sword and cut through it.



Visit the ostentatious tomb of King Midas at **Yassihoyuk** (105 km/65 miles southwest of Ankara on the **Eskişehir** highway). It stands 50 m/165 feet high and 300 m/985 feet wide. A tunnel has been built to enable visitors to walk through the mound. The remains of the former king and items found in his burial chamber are now on display in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. There is also a reconstruction of the burial chamber. You will not be surprised to see that among the many items found, none is gold.

THE CULT OF CYBELE

The ancient city of **Gordion** (open daily 8:30am-5:30pm; entrance fee) is still being excavated. The myth is more impressive than the ruins, which are punishing to walk around in the hot summer sun and often snow-covered in winter. There is a small museum on the site. **Haymana** (south of Polatli) is known for its Roman baths (open 7am-midnight; entrance fee; free to people staying in nearby hotels) with therapeutic minerals. Head northeast along the same road to **Gavurkalesi**, near the village of Derekoy, where a Hittite temple on top of a cliff has two reliefs of Hittite gods carved into its façade.

Southwest along E-90 back past Polatli and Sivrihisar is **Pessinos**, a Phrygian cult center dedicated to the mother goddess Cybele. The ruins lie across a wide area and include a temple (open access). Follow Route 260 to a four-way junction and take a right turn to **Midas City** (Midassehir open daily; entrance fee) at Yazilikaya. The giant rock shrine was once believed to house the tomb of Midas. Now, it is known to have been a temple dedicated to Cybele. The statues that once adorned the rock have since been removed, but you can still see examples of the Phrygian's alphabet. Tombs have been carved into various rocks across the valley.

© China_Crisis

Giant rock tomb, Midas City

SOUTHWEST ANATOLIA

THE BLACK CASTLE OF OPIUM

The official name for the city of Afyon is Afyonkarahisar, or Black Castle of Opium, an odd title derived from a collaboration of the enormous jet-colored rock face with a small fortress clinging to the summit, and from the poppies grown its fields.

© Hedwig Stroch

Opium poppies have been grown in Turkey for more than 1,000 years. Today, poppy cultivation is done under the strict supervision of a state-run factory producing morphine for the pharmaceutical industry.

Getting close to **Afyon** Castle (open access) involves a hair-raising climb up several hundred steps. The views are gripping if you have the head and legs for the climb. The castle was used by Hittites and, later, Byzantines as a refuge from Arabs. The city streets are lined with Ottoman houses and mosques, such as the 13th-century Ulu Camii and Kuyulu Mescit (Mosque of the Well), with its tiled minaret.

THE LAKE DISTRICT

From Afyon, Route 300 swings south through the Sultan Mountain range past Eber Gölü and Aksehir Gölü, the most northerly of the lakes in this region. The Lake District has about seven large bodies of water, some of them saline and some freshwater, and many smaller lakes among the forests and mountains that unite with the Taurus range to the south.

Cross the mountain south of Aksehir and make a detour to **Yalvaç**, site of ancient Antioch ad Pisidia (open daily 9am-5pm; entrance fee), a place of Christian pilgrimage

© Samantha Lafferty

The Lake District

because of its association with St. Paul. According to the New Testament, St. Paul made his first recorded sermon here. He preached to a full synagogue, igniting jealousy among Jews, who drove him from the city. It takes a couple of hours to see the ruins of a temple dedicated to Zeus, a theater, Roman baths and the aqueduct straddling the hilltop. The Church of St. Paul has impressive mosaics. The remains of the synagogue where St. Paul preached are buried underneath the church. Yalvaç is at the end of the long-distance St. Paul hiking trail (see page 466).

EGIRDIR ✩✩

From Yalvaç, take Route 330 south along the eastern shore of Eğirdir Gölü and the eponymous town (70 km/43 miles). Eğirdir is squeezed into the foothills of Mount Davras on the shore of the fourth-largest lake in Turkey. Most travelers stop here on their way to Cappadocia, Antalya or Pamukkale. The area is now attracting adventure seekers who come for trekking, cycling and skiing.

Until 50 years ago, the lake was surrounded by marshes, but these were drained to create fertile land where apples, olives, peaches and grapes are now grown in abundance.

© Samantha Lafferty

Fishing boates, Lake Egirdir

Few historical buildings survived an earthquake in the town in 1914. A **castle** built by King Croesus stands in the old quarter, its walls now withering away. The *han*, or commercial exchange, was built in 1237 and later converted into a *medrese* (college) by Felakeddin Dundar. Its surviving ground storey now contains a bazaar. Facing it is **Hizirbey Camii**, whose great door has a beautiful woodcarving.

Two small islands in the lake – **Yesilada** (Green Island) and **Canada** (Spirit Island) – were linked by a causeway to the headland in the 1980s, so that the inhabitants would no longer be cut off from the mainland when winter ice made it impossible to sail. The stone **Aya Stefanos Church** is the only church still standing on Yesilada. The others were pulled down after the Greeks left.

Eğirdir has two sandy **beaches** over the hill heading out of town past the Tourist Information Office on the road to Isparta. By far the best beach is Bedre (11 km/seven miles north on the way to Barla). Both beaches have campsites.

Eğirdir's *otogar* for intercity and local buses is in the center of town. The train station is on the road into Isparta. *Dolmuses* pass the station on their way into town. Many pensions in Eğirdir have free pick-up services from the train and bus stations.

EXCURSIONS FROM EGIRDIR

The nomadic village of **Akpinar** is a steep seven-km/four-mile walk along Akpinar Village Way up the rugged Sivri Daği range above Eğirdir. Yoruk village (nomadic) is surrounded by apple orchards and has panoramic views across the lake. You can stop for a pancake (*gözleme*) at a traditional *yurt* (tent).

A channel flows south from Eğirdir to Kovada Gölü. The village of **Yukarigokdere** in Kovada Milli Parki is a good place to spend a couple of hours walking among black and red pines, oak and juniper trees. There are several trails for trekkers. To reach the village, travel south from Eğirdir and turn off at the Eğirdir-Beyşehir highway exit for Kovada National Park (35 km/22 miles).

On the west side of Eğirdir Gölü, nestled in Barla Daği, is the rustic hamlet of **Barla**, with its meandering maze of cobblestoned lanes full of run-down Greek houses. The village is religiously conservative, although locals welcome the few travelers who venture there.

A winding drive along Route 330 through the mountains will bring you to **Isparta**, famous for its rose oil, sold all over Turkey in soap and perfume. The town was founded by Greeks from Sparta and it remained a thriving Greek town until the population exchange.

South of Isparta are the mountaintop ruins of **Sagalassos** (75 km/47 miles from Eğirdir), a town conquered by Alexander the Great before it became an important Roman city. The ruins are so high in the mountains that the site has been called the City in the Clouds. The population aban-

Ruins at Sagalassos

© Tijl Vereenooghe

doned Sagalassos after an earthquake, although much of it remains remarkably intact after a landslide covered many of the friezes and stonework.

For an alternate trip from Isparta, follow Route 685 as it loops around to meet Route 650 before it drops south to the dull town of Burdur on the banks of Burdur Gölü. Continue 10 km/six miles along the same road to **Insuyu Mağarasi**, one of the few open caves in Turkey. There are 600 m/2,000 feet of tunnels, underground lakes and incredible stalactites (open daily 8:30am-6pm; entrance fee).

Retrace your steps back past Eğirdir and continue east to **Beyşehir Gölü**, the country's third-largest lake. The southwest region of the lake is a national park. On the opposite bank is the town of **Beyşehir**, which features a lovely stone-arched bridge across an inlet. Take a boat on to the lake to see the twin palaces of **Kizkalesi** and **Kubat-Abad Sarayi**.

KONYA

The plains surrounding Konya are covered with tumulus dating from the Neolithic era. Hittite reliefs have also been discovered. It was later ruled by the Phrygians and the Persians. In 40BC, Amyntas established a brief independent state whose capital was Iconium, from which the modern name Konya is derived.

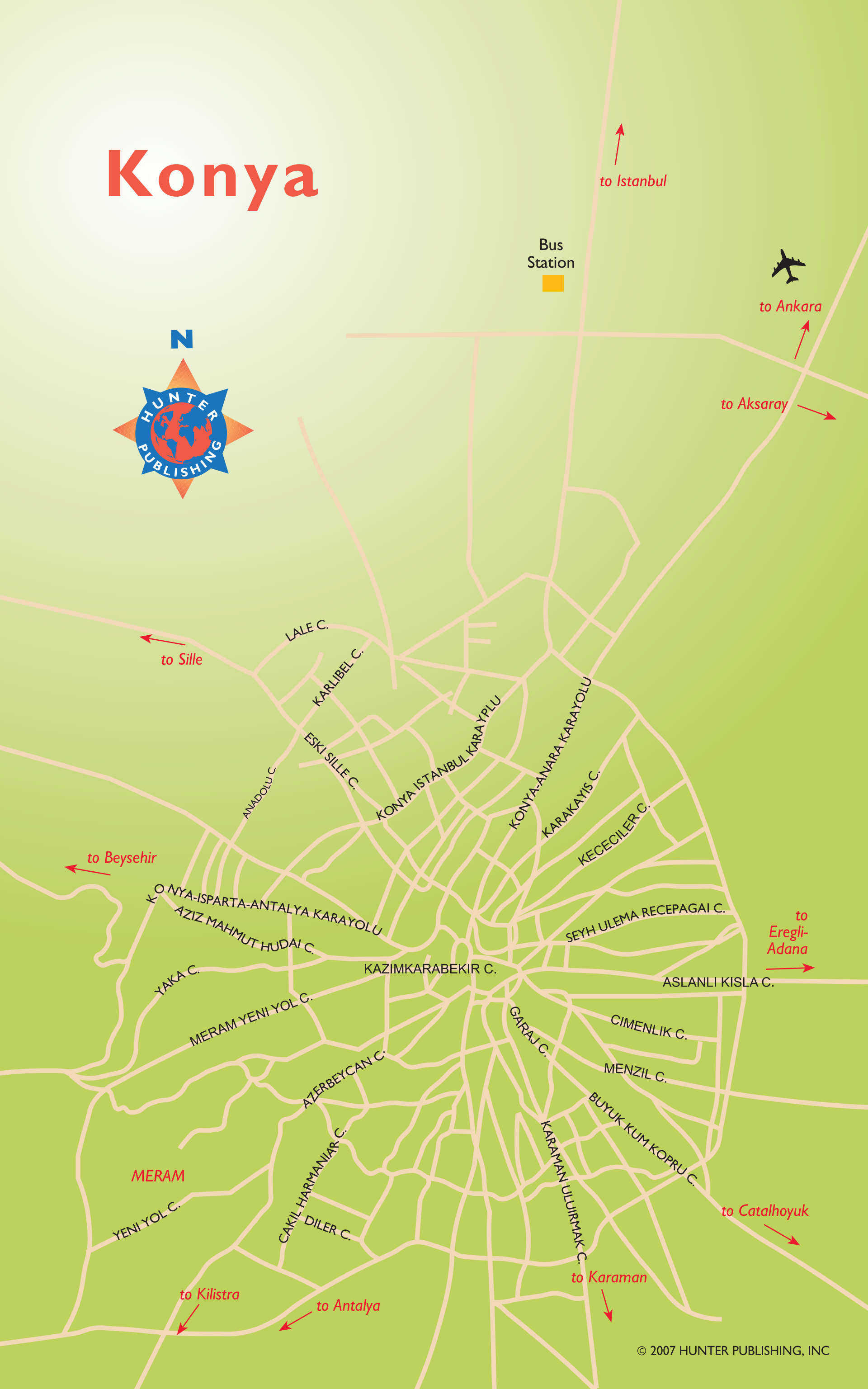
Konya was the capital of the Seljuk Turks between the 11th and 13th centuries and was an important trading post along the Silk Road. Many caravansaries are ste along the roads surrounding the city. The demise of the Seljuk Turks following repeated Mongol invasions led to the settlement of the Karamanlis tribe. They established their dominance in the region and began a succession of bloody battles with the Ottomans, who staked their claim to the region at the end of the 13th century. The Ottomans finally brought Konya into the empire in 1471.

> **ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN:** *Konya is one of Turkey's most conservative cities where it is unusual for women to dine alone or with female friends at night. Consequently, some restaurants expect visiting women to abide by these practices and can make them feel uneasy if they do not.*

First impressions of Konya are ruined by a string of factories along the roaring highway that connects the city to Mediterranean Coast in the south and Ankara in the north. The city itself is surprisingly green,

Opposite: Turquoise turret of the Mevlana Tekke (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

Konya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to Catalhoyuk
to Karaman
to Kilistra
to Antalya

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with leafy boulevards and parks. Most interesting sites are grouped around Alâeddin Park and the central square.

Konya was a center of Muslim theology, art and culture and has been steeped in mysticism through its links with the Islamic sect of Sufism. It remains the country's most devout province and has a huge number of religious schools and mosques.

The Seljuks were kind to the city, leaving many striking tiled and carved mosques. **Alâeddin Camii** (open daily 8am-5pm), the city's oldest Seljuk building, sits on the former acropolis of Iconium at the end of Alâeddin Caddesi. Eight Seljuk sultans are buried on the mound. The mosque was completed in 1221 under the supervision of Sultan Alâeddin Keykubad I. The pulpit is a fine example of Seljuk woodworking.

Opposite the mosque on the rotary is **Karatay Medrese** (9am-12pm, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee), a grand religious college built in 1251. It now houses an amazing collection of Seljuk ceramics and tiles, some of them taken from the summer palace on Beyşehir Gölü and from the Seljuk palace that once stood in Alâeddin Park. Farther along the same road is the **Ince Minare Musezi** (Stone and Wood Museum, open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-12pm, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee), which is worth a visit more for the building than for its Seljuk and Ottoman displays.

A collection of photographs, official documents and clothes are displayed within a private house, the **Atatürk Museum** (open everyday 9am-12pm, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee), which was donated to Atatürk in 1928. Crossing through the bazaar quarter towards the highlight of Konya, Mevlana Tekkesi (see below), you encounter old Turkish houses around Kisla Caddesi.

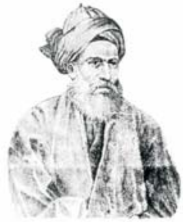
Turkey has the most valuable silk carpet in the world in the Mevlana Tekke in Konya.

MYSTICISM & MEVLANA ✯

The most striking monument in Konya, and the most visited, is the turquoise-tiled domed mausoleum of Celaleddin Rumi, founder of

Mystical whirling Dervishes (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

the Mevlevi order of Sufism. He was born in Northern Afghanistan in 1207, son of the respected teacher Bahaeddin Veled. Rumi and his father fled to Konya to escape the Mongol invasions.



Rumi was a poet and philosopher who took on his father's teaching post following his death. He soon acquired a devoted following who admired his provocative thinking and became known as Mevlana (Arabic for "our master").

The order was based at **Mevlana Tekke**, or lodge, the center of Sufism in Turkey. The Mevlana Dervishes found favor with the Ottomans and lodges were established over all the country. They began to win political influence through their appeal to the masses and people of different faiths. Atatürk banned the order in 1925 after he established the new secular Republic of Turkey.

Mevlana Tekke was later opened as a museum and it remains a place of pilgrimage for Turks, who come as much for what is purported to be a shred of hair from the Prophet Mohammed's beard, as for the tomb of Mevlana. The atmosphere inside is one of veneration, as visitors view the exhibits in near-silence. It is advisable to dress modestly and women should cover their heads.

A tour of the **museum** begins in the courtyard, where an ablutions fountain once used by the Dervishes stands. Inside the main building, to the right, are the tombs of Rumi, his father, his son and other high-ranking Dervishes. Rumi's sarcophagus is covered with his poetry and draped with beautiful cloths. The tomb is surrounded by opulent pieces of art and furniture donated by sultans. The complex also has Dervish cells, a kitchen and ritual hall.

At night, Mevlana Tekke is illuminated; its conical, turquoise dome providing some luster in what is otherwise an austere and dank city by night.

FINDING UNION WITH GOD

Sufis use different means to enter a mystical trance. The Mevlana Dervishes perform a dance called the Sema. They rapidly spin round to create a euphoric trance that brings them into union with God. The Dervishes wear tall, conical hats and flowing, white robes. They spin with one hand raised and upturned to God and the other hand palm down below their waists. This channels energy and blessings from God through their bodies out to the masses. While they dance, a rapturous beat of ancient Islamic hymns and drums is played.

EXCURSIONS FROM KONYA

Northwest of Konya is **Şile** (seven km/four miles; reached by *dolmus* from outside Mevlana Tekke), a giant step back in time to a Greek and Turkish village in the middle of barren plains. Hermits' caves and rock churches cover the hillside. Below is the Byzantine **Aya Elena Church** (built in 327), which has beautiful frescoes across its domed ceiling. The frescoes are quite faded and can be difficult to see through the gloom. Plan to visit in the morning when the light is better.

Karahoyuk (15 km/nine miles from Konya) was once an important inhabitance of the Hittite civilization. The tumulus consists of 27 layers, and many sorts of kitchen utensils, stamps and coins have been found to date.

© Stipich Béla

Restored house, Çatalhoyuk

Çatalhoyuk, just off the road to Karaman, was settled in about 6800BC, making it among the earliest known settlements in Anatolia. The 5,000-strong farming community lived in cramped mud brick houses. Residents entered their houses through a hatch in the roof and life was mostly played out on the rooftops. They made money from weaving textiles and jewelry, which they traded for other goods. Statues and paintings adorned the walls of houses and public buildings. The most interesting items found here have been moved to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara; others are in the small **Archaeology Museum** in Konya (near the Alâeddin Camii; open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee). The settlement has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (open daily 8am-5pm; entrance fee).

EAST OF ANKARA

BOGAZKALE (HATTUSA) ✪✪

About 200 km/125 miles, a three-hour drive, from Ankara along E-88 lie the ruins of the Hittite Empire, who rivaled the Egyptians as a great world power 3,000 years ago. Hattusa, or Boğazkale as it is now known, is an incredible sight as much for its setting within the barren mountains as for the foundations of a formidable city. From Ankara, follow E-88 to Sungurlu and take a right to the village of Boğazkale.

Boğazkale itself is a simple village with pink and green painted houses, a bakery and a market where farmers sell fruit and live chickens. Geese and dogs wander the streets together. While the most important relics have been moved to Ankara, a small museum here (open everyday 8am-5pm; entrance fee) displays pottery, jewelry and a tomb made from the red clay found along the 2,000-km/1,250-mile Kizilirmak, or Red River.

After the museum, start your tour at the main ruins at the **open-air museum** in town (open every day 8:30am-6:30pm in summer and

8:30am-5pm in winter; entrance fee). The site takes a couple of hours to explore by car or four hours on foot. Aside from the gates, the ruins are mostly foundations and require some imagination when exploring.

The Hittites chose Boğazkale because it sits within two valleys, which aided their defense, and because it has a large number of springs, making the surrounding land fertile. Building on the rocky steppes must have been a torrid affair.

Just inside the site entrance is the **Great Temple**, which was used for praying ceremonies and theaters. Farther up the hill is the Lions' Gate, with impressive façades of two lions jutting out to ward off evil spirits. The lions' mouths are open to give the impression of a menacing roar.

The kingdom had six guard gates, though only three have been excavated. The **Lions' Gate** had two sections. Visitors to Hattusa would arrive at the gate on the mountainside and would have been questioned in the small room inside. If they were considered friends of the empire, the second gate, on the roadside, would have been opened, permitting them into the city. Foes of the empire would have been killed.

A short distance away is the **Sphinx Gate**, so-called because of the reliefs on it. The one you see now is a replica, created when the original was moved to Ankara. Below the gate is a 70-m/230-foot secret tunnel carved into the rock. There are various theories behind the use of the tunnel. The most compelling explanations are that it was used by Hittite soldiers to attack enemies and by residents of the city to escape during periods of violence. The tunnel is quite dark, so take a flashlight.

At the highest point is the less impressive **King Gate**, used by soldiers to safeguard the royal family who resided in the nearby Büyükkale, Big Castle. Within the walls of the citadel are the remains of a pool in the palace used by the king for bathing. The entire site is surrounded by a wall that measure 6.5 km/four miles long.

YAZILIKAYA

© Samantha Lafferty

About three km/two miles north of Boğazkale are the ruins at Yazilikaya (open 9am-5pm; entrance fee), the spiritual heart of the Hattusa Empire. Great shards of grey rock lead into smaller galleries where troughs are carved into the rock for offerings to the gods. Deities, including the gods of water, sun, the moon and war, are carved into the giant rocks. The most striking is a carving of 12 gods dressed in conical shaped helmets walking in procession (see previous page).

Back on the road going north towards Çorum is **Alacahoyuk**, a small collection of ruins. The city was guarded by an enormous Sphinx Gate, an elaborate carving of two stone sphinxes. Sadly, these have been moved to the Ankara museum; in their place are concrete casts of the original. The rest of the site has the foundations of a temple and some rock carvings.

SIVAS

On the far reaches of Central Anatolia, amid bleak and empty plains, is the Seljuk city of Sivas. Known as Sebastea in Roman times, the city stands on an important intersection of the trade routes for Baghdad and Persia. The promise of riches brought Seljuk Turks to Sivas in 1172 and the city entered its most prosperous period. The Seljuks were knocked off their perch by the Mongols during the Battle of Kose Dağ. The city recovered and continued to flourish in the 13th century. It was dealt a more serious blow in 1400, when Tamerlane and his warriors raided it.

The Backless Medrese (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

Tamerlane did not destroy the city's clutch of Seljuk buildings, which are the finest in the country. In the center of town is the main square, **Konak Meydani**, which has a fountain in the middle. Walk through the leafy park opposite to **Burucuye Medrese**, a 13th-century theology school, with some delicate carvings around its great portal. Through trees at the bottom of the park rise the red brick spires of **Cifte Minare Medrese** (Seminary of the Twin Minarets). The carvings on the multi-colored stone portal are nothing short of a masterpiece. As you walk to the grand entrance, the illusion is lost. The façade is all that remains.

Across the lane is **Sifahiye Medrese**, built in 1217. The complex is the largest medical institution built by the Seljuks. To the south is **Ulu Camii** (Great Mosque), the oldest building in the city. It now looks abandoned and forlorn with its drab tiled roof and ugly windows covered with bars. Another forgotten building is the **Gok Medrese**, once considered the most beautiful *medrese* ever built by the Seljuk Turks. It is covered in grass and weeds.

Make a detour east of Sivas to the mining town of **Divriği** for its **Ulu Camii** (Great Mosque) complex, dating from 1228. The façade is so spectacular the mosque is listed among UNESCO's World Heritage Sites.

Travelers often overlook Sivas because of its distance from Ankara (442 km/275 miles). Despite its remote and hilly location, Sivas can easily be reached by bus from Ankara or by driving east along E-88. If you intend to take a long trip around Turkey, plan to see Sivas when you visit the Black Sea region. It is a two-hour drive from Tokat.

> *Sivas has also played an important role in the Republican era. Atatürk hosted the Sivas Congress here in 1919 and declared that the country would be free, sparking the War of Independence.*

ADVENTURES

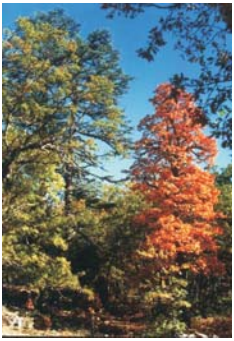
ADVENTURES ON WHEELS

CYCLING TOURS

The mountains and orchards around **Eğirdir Gölü** are overwhelmingly beautiful and best seen at the slow pace of a bike. If you just want to get around for the day, then you can easily cycle through town and take in the castle and inn before going out to Yesilada and the beaches on the town's fringes. For cyclists with more gusto in their legs, there are moderate to grueling trails within easy reach.

The flattest route is through **Kovada Milli Parki**, south of Eğirdir Gölü. The 54-km/34-mile round trip is a straight road through apple orchards. A trekking trail has now been marked around the lake.

Another trail follows a route 25 km/16 miles east of Eğirdir to the Cave of Zindan, near Aksu. The cave was an open-air temple dedicated to Eurymedan and was used as a refuge and temple by the Romans and Byzantines. The intermediate level trail is 50 km/31 miles, round trip, along a hilly road starting at the southeast end of the lake.



© Lale Pension

If you have the leg power, try the difficult 46-km/29-mile ride to the hillside village of Barla. The climb starts from Eğirdir and goes along the western side of the lake before rising into the mountains. Plenty of water is essential for this ride.

Bike hire and maps are available from **Lale Pension** (Kale Mahallesi. 5 Sokak 2, ☎ 0246-3112406, www.lalehostel.com) for $8 a day.

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

TREKKING & HIKING

The best opportunities in **Ankara** are around the dams and forests on the outskirts. The closest dam, **Cubuk** (12 km/seven miles on the Çankiri Highway), has several hiking trails and it can be easily reached by bus. You can also walk the trails around **Kurtboğazi dam** (50 km/31 miles away from the city center on the Ankara-Istanbul highway) and **Bayindir dam** (15 km/nine miles along the Kirikkale highway). About 100 km/62 miles north of the city is **Kizilcahamam Soğuksu National Park**, which has an eight-km/five-mile trekking route. This is a long drive for a short trek, but the park itself is very pretty and you can extend the trail by going off-route into the forest.

Eğirdir is a good base for trekking in the region's mountains. In spring, they are carpeted with tulips, hyacinths and iris. Goats and sheep wander, and vultures and eagles soar above. From spring until late autumn, the black goat hair tents of Yoruk nomads can be seen in the plateaus.

> **WHAT YOU NEED:** *The mountains are high and remote, so it is necessary to go prepared with good walking shoes and enough water. Summer temperatures climb to 30°C/86°F, so you need a good sun protector and a hat. In winter, snow covers the ground, making an ice axe, crampons and thermal clothing essential. Finally, public transport is limited in the mountains, so you will need to hire a taxi or a car.*

© Samantha Lafferty

Back roads around Lake Egirdir are perfect for walking and bike rides

Candir Canyon, or Unknown Valley (65 km/40 miles from Eğirdir, south of Kovada Gölü) is a gorge almost lost in the mountains. Waterfalls spring out at different levels from a fast-flowing river in the canyon. A section of the ancient King's Road (Kral Yolu), which once stretched from the Aegean Coast to Babylon, runs alongside it. Follow the river upstream where the rocks have inscriptions carved into them and on to a meadow with a broad waterfall gushing from the mountainside. You can jump from the rocks into pools of freezing water. The trails here are generally easy.

On the eastern side of Eğirdir Gölü are the rocky crevices of **Dedegöl Daği**, the largest of the lake region ranges. The trek begins with a one-hour drive or taxi to Melekler Yaylasi, a pasture south of the Aksu-

Yenisarbademli road. You can camp here. From the camp, take a path towards the mountain past two shepherd's huts and into the pine forest. After leaving the forest, walk up the gully between mountain crags and join a winding path to the left of the gully. The path climbs and Beyşehir Gölü comes into view. After more than an hour, the trail bears right along a steep ridge. Below, you should see Bostan Cukuru, a sinkhole where snow melts, and to the right is Kartal Tepe. The summit of Dedegol Daği (2,992 m/9,800 feet) is a more than a kilometer farther. The trek should take about five hours.

Rocky **Sivri Daği** (Needle Mountain) rises up above Eğirdir and gives incredible views across the prettiest lake in Southwest Anatolia. There are essentially three trails, ranging from easy to difficult, with some climbing over loose rocks. The main trail starts in the town and heads along the lake to the hospital, before following the Akpinar Village Way along several hairpins to a graveyard. Turn right here and walk along the tractor track to the left of the electricity pylons. This is where the trail splits into different routes. The easy route continues along a clear dirt path up the mountain. The difficult route heads for the saddle between Sivri Daği and Gavurevleri Tepesi, where you can see the remains of a Roman fortress, over rocky ground to the summit. Take care not to walk over to the north side, which is a commando training camp. The trek should take about five hours.

The **DASK** trekking group run by Selami Kalay (☎ 0312-3433343, www.ankaratrekking.com) has weekly excursions into the hills of Central Anatolia.

Eğirdir's Tourist Information Office on the Isparta road has information about trekking routes and can give names of guides.

Mustafa at the **Lale Pension** (Kale Mahallesi. 5 Sokak 2, ☎ 0246-3112406, www.lalehostel.com) is an expert on the mountains around Eğirdir and can give maps and information on trekking routes. He also organizes trekking trips at reasonable prices.

In the Footsteps of St. Paul

Inspired by the epic journeys of St. Paul, Kate Clow and Terry Richardson, pioneers of The Lycian Way long-distance trail, designed a second way-marked trail that traces his steps across the fierce Taurus (Toros) mountain range.

THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL

Paul began life as a Jew called Saul in the southern Anatolian city of Tarsus. He was being trained as a rabbi in Jerusalem at the same time that Christianity was quietly spreading its influence. This brought persecution against the new religion's followers and Saul became one of the members of the Sanhedrin, a group whose aim was to exterminate it. Hearing that fugitives were hiding in Damascus, Saul set out on arduous trek in pursuit of them. It was near the end of this journey that he saw a dazzling light and heard the voice of Jesus question his persecution. Saul was so overwhelmed he converted to Christianity. Soon after, he disappeared for three years, perhaps either to contemplate his life or to flee persecution himself.

He emerged again when the church at Antioch, now the center of Christian activity, sent for him. Now known as Paul, he began his long walk through Asia Minor to spread the message on his missionary tour.

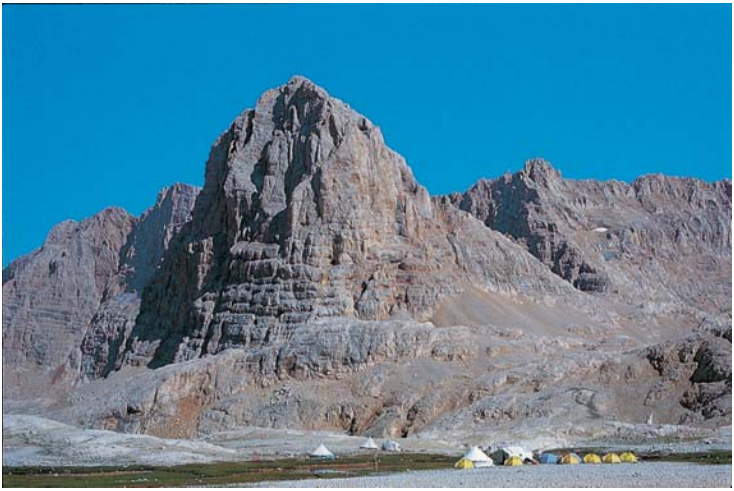
The trail has two branches and is about 500 km/310 miles long. The first path begins at the Roman city of **Perge**, 10 km/six miles east of Antalya, and finishes at **Antioch ad Pisidia** at the crumbling Church of St. Paul, near Yalvaç. The second branch starts at **Aspendos**, site of a remarkable Roman theater, before heading through Köprülü Canyon to join the main trail at the seldom-visited Roman site of **Adada**.

The route spins together Roman remains, deep canyons and waterfalls, and forests of pine, juniper and cedar. It takes in the Davraz, Dedegol and Barla mountains, the peaks of which loom over the Lake District at a height of almost 3,000 m/10,000 feet. The trek encompasses parts of the Roman road once trodden by St. Paul and the caravan routes used by Seljuk and Ottoman traders.

Walkers can expect to encounter quaint hamlets deep in the mountains. This is a chance to experience the full force of Turkish hospitality. Take time to linger with villagers and even accept their invitations to drink tea or have a simple lunch.

The route itself is not difficult, although parts are rocky and remote. Rocks marked with red and white paint act as a guide. Walkers should wear good walking boots to tackle the stony paths and steep slopes.

Guesthouses are available in Antalya for the start of the route and in Yalvaç and Eğirdir at the end. Otherwise, plan to camp – unless you are lucky enough to find a bed in a village house.


© Explore

The remote Taurus Mountains

For detailed information on the route, see Kate Clow and Terry Richardson's excellent website www.lycianway.com. There is also a book produced by the pair to accompany the route. You can book treks with Kate via her website or on ☎ 0242-2431148.

Atil Ulaş Cüce and his team at **Middle Earth Travel** (☎ 0384-2712559, www.middleearthtravel.com) were involved with Kate Clow from the start of the St. Paul Trail project, helping with research and waymarking, so they are about as experienced as it gets. The company runs eight-day tours on the trail in May and September. The trek is grade C and involves average walks of seven hours a day. It is also possible to design your own shorter trek. The eight-day trek costs $630, including transfers, accommodation in a pension and meals.

ADVENTURES ON HORSEBACK

The **Equestrian Sport Club** in Altinpark, Ankara (☎ 0312-3183631) has horseback riding both for fun and with trained instructors for the more serious riders. There are also phaeton rides around the beautiful parkland. Riding courses can be booked for an hour at a time, twice a week.

ADVENTURES ON SNOW

Elmadağ ski resort lies on the northern slopes of Elmadağ Mountain at an altitude of 1,850 m/6,000 feet. It is quite a basic ski resort, with one piste aimed at beginners and intermediate skiers and snowboarders. The slope is fed by one ski lift. Facilities include equipment hire and ski instructors. Elmadağ is a good place to go for your first dabble at skiing because it is so cheap. The ski season runs from December to April and is best between February and March. Private shuttle buses run from Esenboğa International Airport in Ankara to Elmadağ. If you are traveling by car, take D-200 from the center of Ankara all the way to Elmadağ.

The **Davras resort** is 25 km/16 miles from Eğirdir Gölü, which makes it possible to ski in the morning and sail on the lake in the afternoon. The resort is small, although it has a good hotel with a spa. The pistes are suitable for beginners and advanced skiers with runs of up to six km/four miles. You can also snowboard. Equipment is available for hire. Buses and taxis run from Eğirdir to the resort.

The **Kartalkaya ski resort** in the Koroğlu Mountains is better equipped than Elmadağ and attracts crowds of Turks on weekends. It sits at an altitude of 2,200 m/7,200 feet and gets about three m/10 feet of snow in an average winter. Officially, the ski season runs from December to April, although it is best between February and March before the snow turns from power to slush. There are 12 ski runs and the conditions are good for alpine skiing and cross-country skiing through the surrounding forests. The resort has two chairlifts and six T-bar lifts. Equipment can be hired and ski instructors are available. Kartalkaya is a 45-minute drive (54 km/34 miles) from Bolu and about four hours (220 km/137 miles) from Ankara. The fastest way to reach the resort from Ankara is on Route 140 heading northwest.

CULTURAL ADVENTURES

FESTIVALS

The **Festival of European Films on Wheels**, as the name suggests, is a roving romp of film. As many as 90 films are screened throughout the fair, which starts in Ankara and travels to other cities, including Istanbul and Izmir. ☎ 0312-4663484, www.europeanfilmfestival.com.

Ankara also hosts the **International Music Festival**, organized by Sevda-Cenap and Music Foundation. It takes place each April and May and includes international and Turkish classical, folk and contemporary music. ☎ 0312-4270855.

International Ankara Film Festival, also in April and May, holds screenings at Kizilay Büyülüfener Cinema and Cultural Center. Tickets cost $6. ☎ 0312-4687745, www.filmfextankara.org.tr.

Mevlana Commemoration Festival. The mysterious Whirling Dervish sect was founded in the 13th century by Celaleddin Rumi, a philosopher known as Mevlana. He believed that spinning into a state of ecstatic trance would make him one with God. His followers still perform the dance at an annual festival in Konya each December.

The Dervishes, dressed in conical hats and long, white robes, whirl frantically to the beat of ancient Islamic hymns. During the dance, known as sema, they spin with one hand raised and upturned to God and the other hand palm down below their waists. This stance channels energy from God through their bodies and out to the audience. The final moments of the dance are completely frantic, with the faces of the Dervishes lost in a blur of abandonment. It is a bewitching sight.

The festival takes place at Mevlana Tekke, Rumi's burial place, December 1-17. You can purchase tickets from the Tourist Information Office in Konya (☎ 0332-3534021) or from a travel agency. Book them, and a hotel room, well in advance as everything sells out by the end of September.

MUSIC & THEATER

When Atatürk took control of the country it was in a devastated state both economically and socially. He chose Ankara as the capital and set about transforming the town into a cultural center. A lack of money meant the arts were largely an amateur pursuit driven by the vision of a few protagonists. One such visionary was the late Adnan Saygun, a pioneer of Turkish Opera and Ballet.

The first Turkish opera was staged in 1934, although it took until the 1970s for the General Directorate of the State Opera and Ballet to be founded and there to be a big push for performing arts in the capital. The result in Ankara, as in Istanbul, is a thriving industry. Theater performances in the capital are often sold out, with inexpensive tickets attracting families, students and couples alike.

Devlet Opera ve Balesi Genel Mudurlugu, Atatürk Bulvari 50, Opera Ulus, Ankara, ☎ 0312-3242210/3242211. The duck-egg blue and pink-painted opera house runs a season of opera and ballet starting in October. The costumes and scenery are lavish and the audiences are enthusiastic. Performances are in their original languages with Turkish subtitles. Brochures and tickets can be picked up at the opera house and from Biletex. Tickets are available on the day of performances, although the cheap tickets ($5-$7 for a good seat and $26 for a box) mean they sell out quickly.

Ankara Painting and Sculpture Museum, Talatpasa Bulvari, Ankara, ☎ 0312-3102094. The beautiful marble building on the opposite side of Atatürk Bulvari from the main opera house hosts part of the city's opera and ballet season. Tickets are available from Biletex or from the box office. They can also be purchased at the door.

The Presidential Symphony Orchestra Concert Hall (CSO), Talatpasa Bulvari 38, Ankara, ☎ 0312-3091343. This is one of the oldest establishments in the city. It performs on Thursday and Friday evenings between October and the end of May. Tickets can be purchased from the CSO ticket office, Dost Bookstore in Kizilay, Diapason Music Store and METU Culture and Congress Center. The concerts are enormously popular and it is necessary to buy tickets in advance.

> **TIP:** *If you arrive late to a performance at a state theater, you will have to wait until the second act before you can enter the theater.*

Bilkent Odeon Salonu (Bilkent Odeon Amphitheatre), Bilkent Üniversitesi, Ankara, ☎ 0312-2902300. This brand-new building eclipses any other venue in the city with its 4,000-seat arena. The theater stages classical and pop music concerts, theater and ballet. Tickets are available from the box office and DOST Bookstore in Kizilay.

Bilkent Muzik ve Sahne Sanatlari Fakultesi Konser Salonu, Bilkent Üniversitesi Muzik ve Sahne Sanatlari Fakultesi, Ankara, ☎ 0312-2902099. The Faculty of Music and Performing Arts at Bilkent University has a season of classical concerts on Tuesday evenings starting in October and finishing in June. Tickets are sold at Bilkent, Dost Bookstore and Beymen stores.

ODTU Kültür ve Kongre Merkezi (Middle East Technical University Culture and Congress Center), Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Eskişehir Yolu, Ankara, ☎ 0312-2104162. The center hosts an annual music festival in May and June, as well as Turkish pop concerts throughout the year.

DANCE

Murphy's Dance Bar, Hilton Hotel, Tahran Caddesi 12, Kavaklidere, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4682888, has tango lessons for all levels every Tuesday and Saturday. You can practice your technique at open club sessions afterwards.

Ulusoy Ballet, Atatürk Bulvari 243, Kavaklidere, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4282119, is the city's oldest and most famous ballet school. Children aged three upward can join classes. Traditional ballet attire must be worn. Mums can join the yoga classes every Monday and Friday.

Turkish-American Association, Cinnah Caddesi, 20, Kavaklidere, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4262648 (open 7:30pm-9:30pm every Friday and 2pm-3:30pm every Sunday). For anyone caught in a *Dirty Dancing* moment, the cultural center has classes to teach 10 different dances from the foxtrot and rumba to salsa and swing. Basic steps are taught for the first two weeks before the tempo is increased. Each dance is taught over a four-week period.

ART GALLERIES & CLASSES

Ankara's beautiful **Museum of Painting and Sculpture** (Talat Pasha Bulvari, Ulku Sokak, ☎ 0312-3102094) has painting classes between October and June.

Also in the city is the **Artosfer Arthouse**, Kuleli Sokak 33/15 Gaziosmanpaşa, ☎ 0312-4471115, which has package programs for children covering ceramic, drama and painting lessons. Ceramic courses are also available for adults.

Atolye D & G, Rafet Canitez Caddesi 2/63, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4910013. Painting, decorative painting on glass, porcelain and wood, and ceramic courses are available.

Dali Art Gallery, Bestekar Sokak 61/1, Kavaklidere, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4281881, arranges watercolor and oil painting, pattern and decorative painting courses. It also has theater and drama facilities.

Vakifbank Atakule Art Gallery, Cinnah Caddesi, Atakule Shopping Center, Çankaya, Ankara. The two halls of the art gallery exhibit paintings from local and national artists.

LANGUAGE COURSES

The **Active English Foreign Language School** (☎ 0312-4187973, www.active-languages.com) has courses in lots of languages, including Turkish, Spanish, Italian and French. It offers intensive weekly courses and four-week summer schools.

CULTURAL GROUPS

The **British Women's Group** (☎ 0312-4771873) is a gathering of international English-speaking women who meet informally once a month at the Ankara Hilton Hotel. A speaker is usually invited to provide insights into aspects of Turkish life and culture. In addition to the monthly get together, excursions are organized.

The **Turkish American Association** (Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4262648) was founded in 1951. It has an active program of classes, tours and exhibitions in and around Ankara. No membership is required.

SHOPPING

ANKARA

Shopping in Ankara is not as captivating as in Istanbul. There are no ancient bazaars or open-air markets flooded with the atmosphere of the Orient. Instead, there are grids of shopping streets, giant malls and outlet centers.

Traditionally, **Ulus** was the main shopping district with its maze of shabby market streets. When shoppers wanted something more modern, an even greater labyrinth of streets grew up around **Kizilay**. Eventually, the shopping district extended down **Tunali Hilmi Caddesi** into **Kavaklidere**, **Çankaya** and **Gaziosmanpaşa**. These are the districts to go to for upmarket malls and boutiques.

Kizilay is still the most crowded shopping district in the city. Turkish and international brand stores are jammed all along Atatürk Bulvari.

Take time to wander around the many shopping arcades off the boulevard that sell cheap electrical goods, books and jewelry.

The stores around **Ulus** sell electrical appliances, textiles and cheap clothing. You will stumble across small markets and have to push past a hundred street sellers. The stores here are aimed at lower-income Turkish families and you can pick up some bargains, although they may not be the best quality.

MARKETS

Ankara Hali is a permanent farmers' market on Hisarparki Caddesi, towards the citadel. You can buy fruit and vegetables, local cheese, fish and meat. **Cikrikcilar Yokusu**, also in Ulus, is strictly a locals' market, so be ready to barter hard for rock-bottom prices on textiles and clothes.

Another local's market is **Maltepe Pazari** (held everyday on a street behind Maltepe Camii). You can pick up cheap electrical equipment, fruit and clothing.

Sakarya Market is the city's biggest and most famous market. It has a huge variety of stalls from fish and spices, to flowers and textiles. **Ayranci antiques market**, held on the first Sunday of every month near the Ayranci police station, is a great place to hunt for unusual items. There is usually a crush. The lanes that climb up to the citadel, particularly the **Bakircilar Çarşisi,** or Copper Market, are also a good place to look for antiques.

Halfway down Atatürk Bulvari in Kizilay are the twin arcades of **Büyük Çarşi**, a passageway full of jewelry shops, and **Zafer Çarşisi**, two floors of new and secondhand books. Across the boulevard is Kocabeyoğlu Pasaji, more commonly known as **Amerikan Pazari** (American Bazaar). The passageway has traditionally been the place to buy overseas electrical goods, clothes and perfume. As the goods are imported, you will probably find them cheaper at home.

MALLS

Ankara has more than its share of mega malls. The biggest are **Mesa Plaza**, **Ankuva**, **Gima**, **Migros**, **Carrefour** and **Armada**, where you will find hundreds of shops, movie theaters, fast food courts, restaurants and grocery stores.

Armada Shopping Center, Yolu 6, ☎ 0312-2191319, has 150 stores, an 11-screen movie theater, 23 restaurants and wireless Internet access all set within a giant glass and chrome building. Stores include Koton, Marks & Spencer, Polo Garage, Sarar, Beyman and Adidas. Free shuttles depart from the downtown area.

Atakule, Çankaya, ☎ 0312 440 7412, www.atakule.com. This unpretentious shopping arcade at the base of the Atakule tower has 150 clothes stores and gift shops, as well as a movie theater.

Armada Shopping Center

Karum, Kavaklidere, is of a more palatable size. It is located in the center of the wealthy Kavaklidere suburb and has an upmarket atmosphere. You can find Vakko, Polo Garage, Tommy Hilfiger, Zara and Beymen.

Migros Aliservis Merkezi, Iskitler, is the biggest Migros in Turkey. Its entrance has a Disneyland quality, with a marble, columned entryway that's lined with palm trees and decorative lights. The mall has a giant grocery store, clothes stores and a cinema.

BOUTIQUES

DKNY, Filistin Sokak 2/A, Gaziosmanpaşa, ☎ 0312-4689230, sells a range of stylish men and women's clothes.

Laura Ashley, Iran Caddesi 2/A, ☎ 0312-4288432, is the quintessential English chain clothing and homeware store.

Mango, Tunali Hilmi Caddesi 103/E, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4676763, is a trendy European-label women's clothing store.

Marks & Spencer, Tunali Hilmi Caddesi 103, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4269937. You might be surprised to see this British department store in some of Turkey's major cities. It has clothes, lingerie and some homeware items.

Boyner Outlet Kizilay, Atatürk Bulvari 74/B, Kizilay, ☎ 0312-4196071. Boyner is a department store selling Turkish and international branded clothes, shoes, sportswear, cosmetics and perfume.

US Polo, Atatürk Bulvari 137, Kizalay, ☎ 0312-4193366. A smart, unisex outlet of the Polo chain.

BOLU

Bolu Koylu Pazari (Bolu villager market) takes place every Monday in the Ihsaniye district of Bolu. The vendors are villagers who come from all over the region to sell homegrown vegetables and fruit, as well as dairy products, homemade jam and marmalade, and delicious breads.

EGIRDIR

Yoruk Market is held every Sunday between August and October. The Yoruk people come down from their mountain villages to sell apples, yogurt and goats and to buy their own supplies for the winter. A special all-women market, held on the Saturday before the final Sunday of the season, gives a whole new meaning to meat market. During the trading day, mothers of sons looking to marry approach the mothers of potential brides and make offers to them. If they agree, the marriage can go ahead in the following spring.

NIGHTLIFE

Agora, Nenehatun Caddesi 87, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4473786. Strange as it may seem, this is a very popular Greek bar. There are outdoor tables and live music.

Club So, Turan Gunes Bulvari 274, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4911250, is always crowded, especially at weekends. DJs play Turkish, European and American music and there are live bands on Saturday and Sunday. Do not arrive before midnight.

Di Lo Pub, Bestekar Sokak 49, Kavaklidere, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4284080, www.dilopub.com. A cool, airy bar set over a couple of floors. Loud pop music pumps out from the giant TV. Snacks and grilled foods.

Galeri Sera, Horasan Sokak 14, Gaziosmanpaşa, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4463162, is one of the city's swankiest bars. Part of the building is a greenhouse and beautiful plants are displayed around the tables. Live jazz on weekends.

Laila, Soğutozu Caddesi 10, Ankara, ☎ 0312-2879999, has long been considered the best nightclub in Ankara.

Lotus Bar, Ankara Hilton Hotel, Tahran Caddesi, Kavaklidere, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4660054. This lobby bar is a smart place to kick-off an evening in the Kavaklidere and Çankaya districts. Live music between 5pm and 7pm. Otherwise, the bar is slightly lacking in atmosphere, so plan to go on somewhere else afterwards.

The Old Mariner, Bestekar Sokak 78/B, Ankara, ☎ 0312-4286906. Part of the North Shield Pub chain, the Old Mariner has the look of a traditional British pub and, in the evenings, the atmosphere to match.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL PRICES	
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Costs given are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

ANKARA

Good budget accommodation is difficult to find in Ankara. Unless you are really stretching a budget, plan to spend more for a decent hotel in Ankara and less elsewhere.

AUTHOR PICK: **Angora House Hotel**, Kalekapisi Sokak 16-18, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0312-3098380. Tucked away in the middle of the citadel, Angora House is an Ottoman treasure. Antiques and pieces of art are on show everywhere. The attention to detail in the rooms is striking, as are the gloriously restored wooden ceilings throughout the house. This is the best place to stay in the city. $$

AUTHOR PICK: **Ankara Hilton Hotel**, Tahran Caddesi 12, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4550000, www.hilton.com, has a prime location in a swanky district of the city. The business-class hotel has everything you would expect from the Hilton chain, including an onsite travel agency and great restaurants. $$$

© Hilton Hotels

© Gordion Hotel

Gordion Hotel, Buklum Sokak 59, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4278080, www.gordionhotel.com. This 44-room hotel has a classic Ottoman style with some interesting artwork. Rooms are luxuriously fitted out with mahogany and heavy fabrics. The fitness suite has an indoor pool, sauna and steam room. $$$$

Hotel Grand Divan, Meşrutiyet Caddesi, Karanfil Sokak 22, Kizilay, ☎ 0312-4255533, granddivanhotel@ttnet.net.tr. Although this three-star hotel may not be as grand as its name suggests, it is one of the better budget hotels in the downtown area. It has 40 rooms, a restaurant and a *hamam*. $$

AUTHOR PICK: Hotel Houston, Guniz Sokak 26, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4661680, www.hotelhouston.com.tr. The hotel's 59 rooms are large and traditional in style with cable TV. The welcoming staff, good service and location add a lot of notches to the Houston's bedpost. $$

© Hotel Houston

Hotel Mar & Si, Ruzgarli, Esdost Sokak 10, ☎ 0312-3108383. The interior of this hotel is stuck in a time warp, but it is cheap, clean and centrally located for the city's main sites. $

Hotel Midi, Karyagdi Sokak 40, Çankaya, ☎ 0312-4096434, www.midihotel.com, is a European standard mid-range hotel. Recently opened and tastefully decorated from its lounge bar to its 73 rooms and free fitness suite. Midi is just a couple of streets away from Çankaya's historical attractions, shops and restaurants. $$$

© Ramada Hotels

AUTHOR PICK: Hotel Ramada Ankara, Tunali Hilmi Caddesi 66, ☎ 0312-4282000, www.ramadaankara.com, is ultra-modern. It has some interesting touches, such as Japanese-style beds, wireless Internet and giant plasma TVs. Head to the long lobby bar for a drink or to the Italian restaurant for dinner. $$$

Neva Palas, Esat Caddesi 32, ☎ 0312-4195888, www.nevapalas.com.tr. Designed to resemble an Italian mansion, Neva Palas is swathed in marble and oversized chandeliers. The hotel has a rooftop bar and restaurant, Internet connection and satellite TV. $$$$

BEYPAZARI

AUTHOR PICK: Me'valarin Konaği, Cumhuriyet Mahallesi, Kostyolu Sokak Muzeyani 31, ☎ 0312-7623698, www.mevalarinkonagi.com, is set within an enormous old Turkish mansion. It is stylish, yet homely. $$

© Mevalarin Konagi

Selam Otel, Milli Egemenlik 2, ☎ 0312-7623989, is a traditional Turkish house converted into a small hotel. $

Suluhan Pansiyon, Zafer Mahallesi, Suluhan Sokak 7, ☎ 0312-7633034. A beautiful Ottoman-style guesthouse with pretty rooms and home-cooked meals. $$

BILECIK

AUTHOR PICK: Grand Kent Hotel, Itfaiye Karsisi 2, ☎ 0228-2127888, www.kentotelbilecik.com, is a business-standard hotel run by a local family that traces its roots back to the Ottomans. The spacious rooms are modern and comfortable. This is a good base for exploring Northwest Anatolia. $$

BOGAZKALE

Hotel Asikoğlu, located close to the village museum, ☎ 0364-4522004, www.hattusas.com, has 35 clean and spacious rooms. The décor and standard is basic, although the Ottoman restaurant is cozy. $$

Mavi Ocak Otel & Restaurant, on the Ankara-Çorum highway, ☎ 0364-3130033. This motel-style complex opened in 2000. It has 51 rooms and nine suites set around a pool and tennis courts. It is the best choice in the area and is popular with tour groups visiting the nearby Hittite ruins. The restaurant serves local dishes and has live music in the evenings. $$

DAVRAS

Sirene Davras Mountain Resort, Kulovasi Mevkii, Coban Isa Koyu, ☎ 0246-2672002, www.davras.com/sirene_davras.html, is a new 123-room ski and sports hotel with soccer fields, tennis courts, a shopping arcade, cinema, nightclub and sports bar. $$$

EGIRDIR

The Big Apple Restaurant, Yesilada Mahallesi, ☎ 0246-3114555, incorporates a pension that sits on the causeway out to Yesilada. Some of the rooms have good lakeside views. You can choose a private room with en-suite bathroom or opt for a dormitory bed. $

© Hotel Egirdir

Hotel Eğirdir, Poyraz Sahil Yolu, ☎ 0246-3113961, www.hotelegirdir.com, has 63 rooms. It is situated on the causeway, and has been completely renovated to a good standard. $

Koşk Pension & Restaurant, Yazla Mahallesi 67, ☎ 0246-3114382, is a small guesthouse run by a local fisherman's family. It sits on a hill close to the beach. Rooms are simple and the food is home-cooked. You can take a boat tour with the owner, Tayfun Oktar. $

AUTHOR PICK: **Lale Pension**, Kale Mahallesi. 5 Sokak 2, ☎ 0246-3112406, www.lalehostel.com. This friendly pension overlooking the lake and fisherman's harbor has single and dormitory rooms. The rooms are small, but comfortable. A home-cooked dinner is served each night on the rooftop terrace and includes fresh fish caught by the owner, Mustafa. He is also a mine of information on trekking, climbing and cycling in the area. Luggage storage and laundry service are available. $

LALE PENSION
Magnificent View Point
© Lale Hostel

KONYA

Otel Derya, Ayanbey Caddesi 18, Karatay, ☎ 0332-3520154, is a high standard budget hotel with spacious and attractively decorated rooms. Friendly staff. $

AUTHOR PICK: **Hotel Rumi**, Durakfatih Mahallesi, Durakfatih Sokak 5, Karatay, ☎ 0332-3531121, www.rumihotel.com, is a new boutique hotel close to the main attractions. It has a *hamam* and fitness suite, as well as a rooftop restaurant overlooking the Mevlana Museum. $$

The rooms at four-star **Hotel Balikcilar**, Mevlana Karsisi 1, ☎ 0332-3509470, www.balikcilar.com, have views of the Mevlana Museum. Some of the rooms are small. There is a sauna and *hamam*. $$$

© Hotel Balikcilar

KÜTAHYA

The new and chic **Qtahya Otel & Restaurant**, Atatürk Bulvari 56, ☎ 0274-2262010, is opposite the bus station and close to the center of town. An eighth-floor restaurant serves good-quality grilled items. $$

WHERE TO EAT

ANKARA

Eating cheaply in Ankara is not difficult. The streets around **Sakarya Sokak** in the middle of Kizilay are packed with excellent kebab houses and simple restaurarants serving home-cooked Turkish dishes. Street food abounds in **Kizilay** with *pide*, *lahmacun* (small, pizza-style bread topped with meat or cheese) and *simit* (bread rolls) all easy to find.

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

Ankara is a wealthy city and there are a growing number of upmarket cafés and brasseries clustered in **Kavaklidere**, **Çankaya** and **Gaziosmanpaşa.** It has a strong European and American influence, with sports bars, pasta restaurants and waffle cafés. Given its land-locked position, the city also has some surprisingly good fish restaurants.

Café des Cafés, Tunali Hilmi Caddesi, 83/A, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4280176. Stop by this brasserie for croissants and coffee while you read the newspaper, or for a steak or bowl of pasta at dinner. $$

Café Lins, Bestekar Sokak 84/A, ☎ 0312-4282349, is a spacious brasserie serving cakes, pastries and sandwiches. $

Cilli, Tunus Caddesi 90/1, Kavaklidere and various outlets throughout the city . A café serving kebabs, sandwiches and soup. $

Greenhouse Restaurant, Ankara Hilton Hotel, Tahran Caddesi 12, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4550000, www.hilton.com, is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The menu changes every three months, although steak with pepper sauce cooked at your table remains the house specialty. A pianist and a violinist play from 8pm. $$$

Gusto Restaurant & Bar, Tahran Caddesi 5, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4685400, serves high-quality Italian specialties from lunch until the early hours. $$$

Hamsikoy, Bestekar Sokak 78, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4277576, is a great restaurant serving fish and other specialties from the Black Sea region. Dining is outside during the summer and moved into the three-storey dining room during the cooler months. $$

Hisar Kule Restaurant, Doyran Sokak 3, Citadel. The garden enjoys fine views of the city. To eat here on a warm evening is the ultimate in romance. The good food is just incidental. $$

Ido Café, Koyunpazari Yokusu 60, Samanpazari, ☎ 0312-3111858. Set in a restored Ottoman house, Ido has the atmosphere of somebody's home rather than a café. It serves homemade dishes and cakes and offers wine-tasting one evening a month. $$

Kale Washington, atop the walls in the citadel, ☎ 0312-3114344, is Ankara's most famous restaurant. Its ratings went through the roof after Bill Clinton dined there. The dining rooms are spread across the floors of two adjoining 400-year-old houses. The views are wonderful. $$$

Korfez Lokantasi, Bayindir Sokak 24. This basic eatery in Kizilay has long been a favorite of locals. Tasty, cheap grilled items, fish and *mezes* are the specialty. Women dining alone should ask for the family room, *aile salonu.* $

The Lox Waffle Café, Butten Sokak 7/B, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4283406, serves waffles and other sweet and savory indulgences. $

Merkez Lokantasi, located at Atatürk Orman Ciftligi, is the oldest restaurant in Ankara, founded by Atatürk himself in 1933. It has a large indoor dining room and a garden and is famous for its traditional Turkish *meze* and grilled foods. $$

Mezzaluna, Iran Caddesi, Turan Emeksiz Sokak 1, ☎ 0312-4675818. The chef is Italian and the décor is pure Florentine. It offers 25 varieties of pizza and endless pasta dishes that are best in the city. The pizzas are and are drowning in Parma and Cotto ham, Neapolitan salami and mozzarella. $$$

Trilye, Gaziosmanpaşa, is a fish restaurant with a twist by blending Far Eastern and Turkish cooking styles. Open all day. $$$

Washington Restaurant, Doyran Sokak 5/7, Citadel. Situated in an atmospheric 400-year-old house, Washington is a favorite with Ankara residents. Very friendly restaurant with good prices. $$

Wok, Gaziomanpasa, has an à la carte Far Eastern menu and a sushi bar. $$

Zenger, Doyran Sokak 13, Kaleiçi, ☎ 0312-3117070, www.zengerpasa.com. Regional dishes are served daily at this sweet old house in the citadel. Live music on some evenings. $$

EGIRDIR

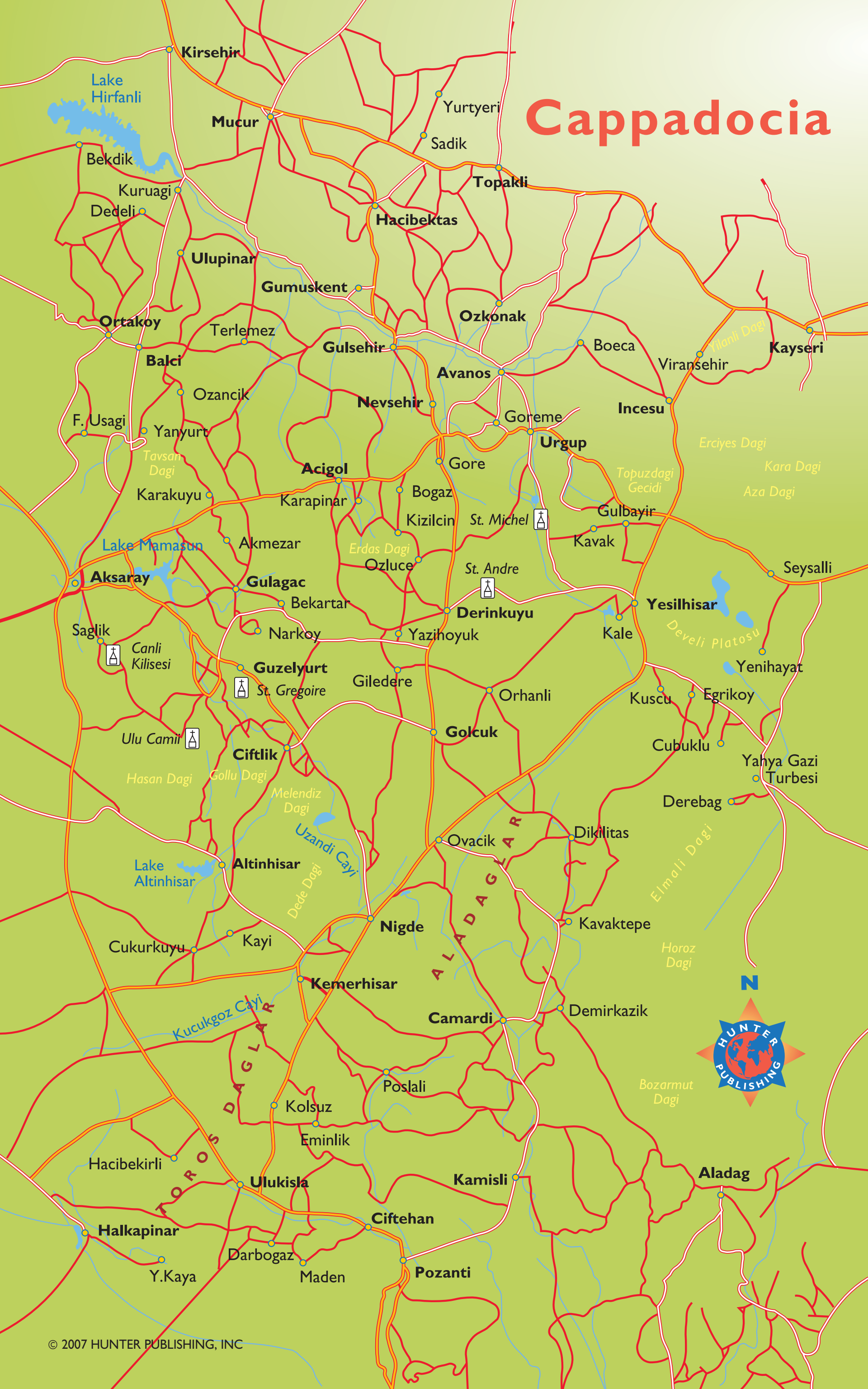
The Big Apple Restaurant, Yesilada Mahallesi, on the causeway out to Yesilada, ☎ 0246-3114555, has giant windows that give wonderful views of the lake. There is a wide choice of tasty *meze* and fish dishes. Portions are generous. $$

KONYA

Gulbahcesi, Civar Mahallesi, Gulbahcesi Sokak 3, ☎ 0332-3530768, www.gulbahcesikonya.com, sits around a courtyard of restored houses behind the Mevlana Museum. It has a good reputation for its grilled items and home-cooked Konya dishes. There is a terrace open in summer and whirling dervish shows. $$

Mevlevi Sofrasi, Civar Mahallesi, Sehit Nazimbey Caddesi 1A, Karatay, ☎ 0332-3533341. The homemade local cuisine on offer here is good enough to detract from the no-frills décor. There is also a tea garden. $

Cappadocia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Guzelyurt
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Giledere
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Yahya Gazi Turbesi
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Gollu Dagi
Melendiz Dagi
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Cappadocia

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The featureless plains of Central Anatolia give way to pink, cream and ochre valleys of rock. Shaped by volcanic eruptions and the wind, the Cappadocian valleys are imprinted with the swirls and ripples of sand dunes. It is a tortured landscape quite unlike anywhere else on earth.

Across the valleys, a haphazard jumble of absurdly phallic, conical mounds stretch into the sky. In a land settled by devout Christians, these swelling masses of rock are enough to make any monk blush. Many of the rocks, known by the more mythical name of "fairy chimneys," rise to 50 m/165 feet and have black basalt caps that cling to pinnacles of softer rock. Others are squat and mushroom-like.

Underneath this weird terrain things become even more surreal. Religious hermits seeking to protect themselves from marauding armies scoured vast subterranean cities. As well as chiseling into Middle Earth, they sculpted churches into cliffs and covered them with frescoes.

Only a couple of decades ago, Cappadocians lived a difficult life in the thousands of ancient caverns. These days, the rocks are more likely to harbor boutique guesthouses. Farmers still use the roadside caves to store a cornucopia of quinces, lemons, apples and potatoes.

In many ways, Cappadocia retains a semblance of rural idyll. Women in villages use communal bread ovens and make cloth dolls for their dowries; livestock often outnumbers the populace and the donkey and cart is the preferred means of transport. Tourism is encroaching on that lifestyle as droves of travelers come to watch the sky turn from mauve to orange behind the rock pyramids.

Image courtesy Turkey ourism Board

Cappadocia's rock churches are enchanting under snow

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY PLANE

Domestic flights into **Erkilet Airport** (ASR, ☎ 0352-3383353) in Kayseri are the only form of air transport into Cappadocia, now that flights into Nevsehir have been suspended. **Turkish Airlines** (www.turkishair lines.com) has daily flights from Istanbul to Kayseri. Book online or at ☎ 718-751-2600 in the US (open Monday to Friday 9am-5:30pm Pacific Standard Time) or ☎ 0352-2223858. One-way fares cost about $50 and take 1½ hours.

GETTING INTO CAPPADOCIA

Kayseri is a transport hub with few reasons for visitors to hover for long. The airport is about 75 km/46 miles from the main sites in Cappadocia and there is no bus service. Hire a car or book a shuttle transfer with a local tour company. **Argeus Tourism & Travel** is a sales agent for Turkish Airlines in Cappadocia. It runs a shuttle service between the airport and hotels in Ürgüp, Avanos, Göreme, Üçhisar and

Nevsehir. One-way fares cost between $9 and $11. Also, check to see if your hotel arranges its own shuttle service.

MAIN ROADS

Driving to Cappadocia from Istanbul is no mean feat. It is a 730-km/450-mile trip along the busiest routes in the country, the **E-80** and **E-89** highways between Istanbul and Ankara. From here, head south on E-90 along the entire eastern bank of Tuz Gölü. At Aksaray, turn east on to **Route 300** and head to Nevsehir.

BY TRAIN

Trains chug their way between Istanbul, Ankara and Kayseri. The best train is the *Vangölü Express*, although it typically does not live up to its name. The service departs from Haydarpaşa station at 8:05pm and arrives in Kayseri at 2:33pm the next day. A one-way ticket costs $33, although you may want to book a sleeper car for $46 (single berth) and $39 (twin berth). Once in Kayseri, you have to negotiate your way into Cappadocia proper.

BY BUS

Long-distance buses usually stop in **Nevsehir**. Check that the bus company operates a service into the *otogar*, where you can pick up a *dolmus*, rather than dropping you on the side of the highway. If you are traveling from Eastern Turkey or the Mediterranean, you may have to change at Niğde. Services from Istanbul (12 hours) and Ankara (six hours) are frequent and direct.

BY TAXI & *DOLMUS*

Once in Cappadocia, getting around can be frustrating. Most *dolmus* services (shared taxis) run every hour and loop between Ürgüp, Avanos, Göreme, Üçhisar and then back to Ürgüp. Worse still, to reach villages off the main tourist trail you will need to head back to Nevsehir to change bus.

Taxis run along the same system as elsewhere in Turkey, with day and night meter rates. These are fine for short trips and you may be able to negotiate rates for longer journeys. In the end, it makes sense to hire a car or book a tour to really get the most out of a trip to Cappadocia.

HISTORY

Cappadocia stands on a plateau dominated by the volcanic mountain of Erciyas, the third-highest mountain in Anatolia (3,916 m/12,850 feet). Millions of years ago, Erciyas erupted ferociously, hurling ash across the plains. As this cooled, it became compressed into a cream-colored rock called tufa. The wind and rain of the harsh Anatolian winter shaped the rock into deep ravines and cones. Some of the burning embers welded together to form tough caps of rock. As the soft tufa eroded, this hard layer was left balancing perilously on top, creating bizarre formations.

Nature's sculpting was further advanced by the human hand. In 2000 BC, the Hittites swept in. They first inhabited the natural caves before burrowing deeper. The remote and silent caves later attracted Christians in search of contemplation and escape from Roman persecution. Monks began carving simple monasteries into the cliffs.

In the seventh century, the spread of Islam brought Arab raids on the Byzantine Empire. Between 726 and 843, the Iconoclastic era saw the outlawing of iconic worship and the destruction of most frescoes and mosaics. These difficult times drove Christians underground, where they tunneled into the tufa to create cavernous cities.

When the Byzantines regained control, the troglodytic population resurfaced and feverishly set about carving new churches into cliff faces and rocks. These churches, in the valleys of Göreme, Ilhara and Soğanli, were complete with pillars, crypts and domes. Monks decorated the walls with powerful and vivid frescoes of Biblical images, perhaps a reaction to their earlier repression. They continued to build churches until the beginning of Ottoman rule. It is estimated there are as many as 400 churches in Cappadocia.

Hidden church treasures

Nature's sense of humor at work (© Journey Anatolia)

> **TIP:** *Often travelers stop in Cappadocia for a couple of days as part of a wider tour. This gives only enough time to race around the triangle at the center of Cappadocia. Plan to spend at least four days or perhaps even a week and discover the lesser-known caves and villages. This will also give you time to bike through one of the multi-hued valleys or to see it all from the skies in a hot air balloon.*

SIGHTSEEING

Travelers to Cappadocia will struggle to find anything of the solitude that Christians once enjoyed among the interlocking valleys. The region is firmly on the backpacker trail and heaps of tourists come on organized tours each year between April and October. The winters are bitter, but often sunny, and snow coats the chimneys. In many ways, this is the best time to visit. Even then, you will have to share the views.

A tour of the region begins at **Aksaray**, where the highways from Ankara and Konya meet, south of Tuz Gölü. The town derives its name from the white marble palace that was built at the behest of Seljuk ruler Kilicarslan II. The town's position on an intersection means it has several inns, as well as an attractive Ulu Camii (15th century).

Farther along Route 300 is **Nevsehir**, the region's principal town. It is difficult to work out where the center of this slightly scruffy town lies. Unfortunately, it is likely that bus travelers will stop here several times during a tour of Cappadocia. The ruined citadel atop a hill of brightly painted houses is the main attraction, although this can be seen from a distance without the need to climb.

SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (✪) are worth a visit. Two stars (✪✪) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (✪✪✪), just do it. You won't be sorry.

ÜÇHISAR & ORTAHISAR

Fourteen km/nine miles east of Nevsehir along the base of a triangle of troglodyte towns is Ortahisar, with its towering honeycomb fortress that looks like a fairy castle, badly chiseled by an overenthusiastic child. Make your way back along the road towards Nevsehir and turn right to Üçhisar. Here, another fortress has been scooped out of a giant, jagged rock. Millennia of erosion have revealed the inner cham-

Ortahisar

© Shirley Katz/Dreamstime

bers of the fortress and the complexities of Cappadocian communal living. You can climb to the top of both fortresses (open daily 7:30am-dusk; entrance fee) and look down on the hollowed-out pyramids scattered across the entire Göreme Valley. Take advantage of the late opening to see it just before sunset.

GÖREME VILLAGE

Göreme has changed unrecognizably. Once a farming community, it has totally succumbed to tourism and everything that goes with it. Pensions and tour companies abound. There are still some interesting cave houses here, but it is difficult to see them through the haze of billboards.

This is the place most backpackers choose to stay because of its selection of cheap pensions, some of them in caves or Greek houses. Travelers on a bigger budget might prefer the more sophisticated town of **Ürgüp**. Those with a car can choose to stay in one of the pretty outlying villages.

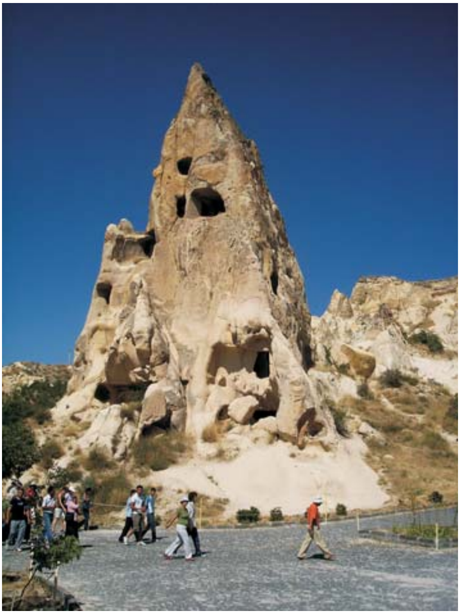
Dolmuses loop around Nevsehir, Ürgüp, Avanos and Göreme village on their way to Göreme Open Air Museum.

© Samantha Lafferty

Ant hills in Göreme

GÖREME OPEN AIR MUSEUM ☆☆

The most visited churches in Cappadocia are those clustered in Göreme Open Air Museum (two km/1.2 miles from Göreme village; open daily 8am-7pm; entrance fee). The Göreme Valley was one of the great centers of Christianity from the fourth century and the place where St. Basil first introduced the practice of worship and religious education. The rocks conceal as many as 30 churches, some of them painted with intense frescoes. A few of these early churches suffered damage during the Iconoclastic period, when the idea of worshipping an icon was so abhorrent that the eyes of the figures were scratched out. Other acts of graffiti were perpetrated by Turks following the population exchange in 1923.


© Noumenon

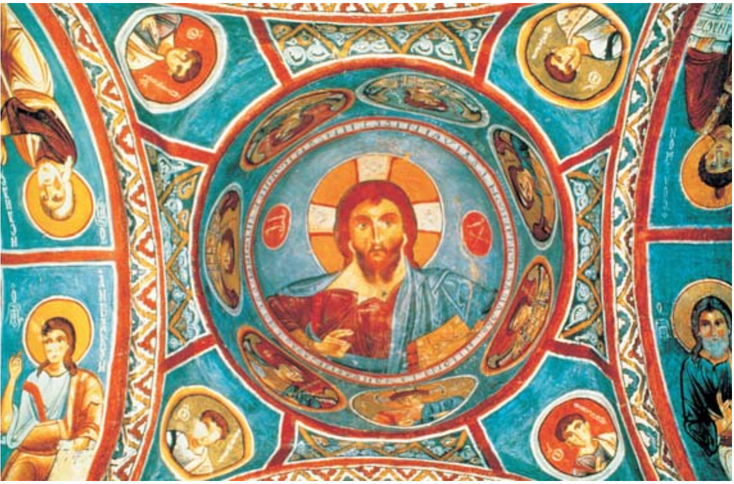
Rock formation in Göreme Open Air Museum

It takes about an hour to walk around the churches, which are built over several levels. The route is signposted and more than one million visitors each year follow this well-trodden trail. The first painted church on the tour is **Elmali Kilise** (Church with the Apple), so-called because of the round object held by Jesus in one of the paintings. Enter through a narrow arch and walk into a domed room supported by four pillars. The walls of the church portray some of the most significant events in the life of Jesus. There are frescoes of his baptism, the Last Supper, his Crucifixion and the Betrayal by Judus.

The 11th-century **Church of St. Barbara** occupies another part of the same rock. Its walls are decorated with primitive geometric motif and animal designs, along with more simple frescoes of Jesus and St. Barbara, a beautiful and tortured soul who became the patron saint of soldiers.

The route leads next to **Yiilani Kilise** (Church with the Snake), unusual because it does not contain any domes or pillars. Instead, it has a barrel-vaulted ceiling with frescoes across its walls. The paintings depict Helena and Constantine holding the True Cross and St. George on horseback killing the dragon.

BEWARE YOUR WISHES: *The most interesting fresco is that showing Onouphrios, a beautiful girl who tired of men bothering her. She prayed for some respite from the ranks of lusty admirers and was turned into an old man with a beard. She is shown on the fresco as half-man, half-woman.*

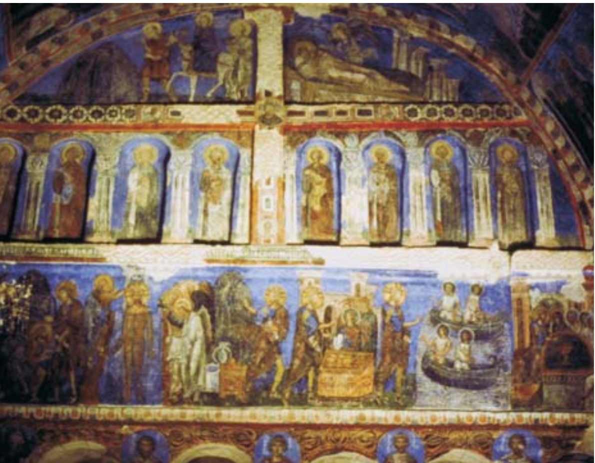


© Turkey Tourism Board

Frescoes in Karanlik Kilise, the Dark Church

Continue along the route past a series of chambers used as a monastery to **Karanlik Kilise** (Dark Church), Göreme's answer to the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Once a gloomy cave, its interior has been opened up to expose dramatic frescoes of the Last Supper, the Betrayal by Judus, the Adoration of the Magi, the Three Kings bearing gifts to Jesus and others showing the disciples. The lack of sunlight has preserved the vibrancy of the red, orange and blue-grey frescoes.

Next, **Carikli Kilise** gained its odd name, meaning Church with the Sandals, from the painting of Christ with a pair of shoes. The church is now reached via a metal staircase after the original entrance collapsed. Descend down the rock to **Kizlar Kilise**, a three-storey convent with a refectory and kitchen once serving as many as 300 nuns.



© Turkey Tourism Board

Walk back towards the entrance and cross the road to **Tokali Kilise** (Church with the Buckle, shown here). This is the largest and most stunning of the churches, yet it is often missed by travelers because it is set apart from the main group. The church dates from the 10th century and is actually four interconnected chambers. The walls of the church are covered with sapphire-blue panels each showing a scene from the life of Jesus.

Behind Tokali Kilise is **Kiliçlar Kilise** (Church of the Swords) in a valley of the same name. Unfortunately, it is not open to visitors. Just outside the main museum on the road back to Göreme village is El Nazar Valley, with its partially ruined church. Close by is **Sakli Kilise**, or Hidden Church, so named because its was concealed by a landslide.

> **TIP:** *Göreme Open Air Museum is bursting with travelers in spring and summer. Get there when the site opens and go straight to the Dark Church at the top of the caves to avoid the crowds. Most tours begin in the churches at the bottom.*

ÇAVUSIN

Çavusin (four km/2.5 miles north of Göreme village) is the oldest settlement in the region and has been deserted because of the risk of falling rocks. A broad, scooped out rock sits atop a hill of smaller caves and stone houses. Of all the bizarre formations in Cappadocia, this most closely resembles something dreamed up a by Hollywood film studio.

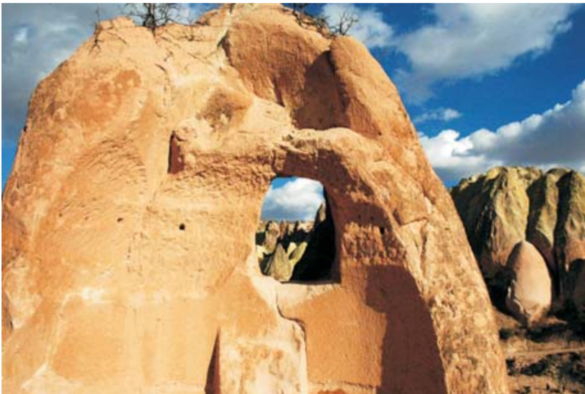
Just before the village is the **Church of John the Baptist**, which dates from the fifth century. It has almost collapsed into the ground, but is worth a stop because it is regarded as the oldest church in the region. The exterior of Çavusin Church, a little farther on, has also worn away, revealing its gaudy brown and green paintings.

ZELVE ✭✭

Just past Çavusin, a turning on the right leads to the pink-hued **Zelve Open Air Museum** (open daily 8am-5pm; entrance fee). Greek Christians and Turks lived in these caves until the Greeks were sent back to their homeland in 1924. The Turks were themselves forced to leave in the 1950s when erosion made it too risky to stay. A mosque carved out of the rocks stands near the entrance.

Chamber entrances, Zelve (© Noumenon)

Zelve is now a fascinating string of three valleys that most travelers barely spend half an hour touring. Consequently, those who want to really explore it can easily find space to contemplate its atmospheric beauty. The most interesting valley can reached by taking a path to the right from the entrance. You pass a mosque before reaching a rock-cut complex accessible via a metal ladder. Crawl through this complex to find empty chambers where you can sit and examine the strange formation opposite, with its huge crater in the middle. This once served as the entrance to a monastery. The many layers of windows and cave entrances makes the entire rock look like a giant sponge that has had pieces picked off it.



© Journey Anatolia

Retrace your steps and follow one of the many paths from the mosque that dart off in different directions skirting around random fairy chimney and cave complexes in the second and third valleys. A four-km/2.5-mile trek will bring you to **Red Valley**.

CAUTION: Zelve has many dark and concave tunnels that are accessible via ladders cut into the rock. It is not advisable to delve too deep without a guide and a flashlight.

© Samantha Lafferty

Pasabağ, known formerly as Monks Valley and colloquially as Imagination Valley, has the most bizarre collection of rocks, which guides profess look like a camel and a host of famous people, including former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The elements appear to have been so creative here that you could almost question whether they were carved by a few wily locals.

AVANOS

Avanos (seven km/four miles from Zelve) lies along Kizilirmak River, the longest river in Turkey. The town is known for its pottery and the red clay used to make it is scooped from the banks of this river. Pottery has been produced in Avanos for centuries and some of the techniques still used date back to Hittite times. Avanos is a mass of family-run potteries, most of which offer tours and let visitors attempt to make pots on their primitive wheels. The old village of Avanos winds up the hills leading away from the town and is a maze of Ottoman stone houses.

Avanos pottery baking in the sun

Five km/three miles east of Avanos, along a signposted road, is the 13th-century Seljuk caravansary, **Sari Han**, famed for its soft yellow stones. It has been totally restored and now holds Whirling Dervish shows. West of Avanos, a right turn leads to the underground city of **Özkonak**.

Another 25 km/16 miles west along Route 765 towards Kirsehir is the monastery of **Hacibektaş** (open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee), home to the Bektaşi dervishes, an order that became chaplains to the Ottoman Janissaries. The founder, Haci Bektas-i Veli, spread the message of Islam in the Byzantine valleys and many people followed him by converting to the faith. Haci Bektas' main task was to distribute food to the needy in local villages and it this work that still draws pilgrims to pay their respects at his tomb. As with the Whirling Dervishes, the order of Haci Bektas was dissolved by Atatürk. An annual festival held August 16-18 commemorates his work.

ÜRGÜP

The rapidly growing town of Ürgüp is set across a chain of hills. Along its steep roads is a collection of striking sand-colored stone Greek and Ottoman houses, many of them partly set in the caves. The center of town has a good choice of cave hotels and stylish restaurants.

If you get tired of trying to see rock churches through a stream of other travelers, head south of Ürgüp where wonderful gorges, cave churches and fairy chimneys are strung together by a series of rural villages.

MUSTAFAPASA ☆

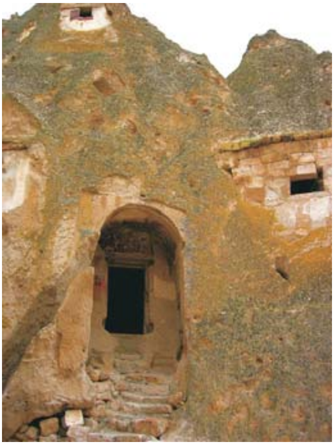
The poplar-lined road to Mustafapaşa winds through green hills, vineyards, and apple and pear orchards. Nestled in a valley of red, yellow and pink volcanic stone, Mustafapaşa is an Old Greek village full of houses still with their original iron doors and stone arches. The churches, on the other hand, are crumbling and their frescoes are faded. The village suffered much upheaval after the Greeks fled and some of the houses still contain Biblical frescoes that were damaged by the Turks who in-

herited them. Climb the hill by the Old Greek House restaurant for views across the village.

Mustafapaşa is set around a main square, one end of which features the elegant **Sakir Paşa Medrese**, a 19th-century Ottoman college with an intricately carved portal. Walk farther into the village to the **Church of Constantine and Helen**, dedicated to Constantine the Great and his empress, Helena. It has beautiful frescoes dating from 1895. About one km/.6 miles north of the village is the **Church of St. Basil**, a cave church. If its interior looks like any typical church that is because it was restored in modern style towards the end of the 19th century.

AYVALI

Halfway along the Ürgüp-Mustafapaşa road is a right-hand fork that leads to Ayvali. This rustic village is built into a buttermilk-colored gorge with towering caves and flat-roofed cottages all huddled along its banks. The road into the village weaves through vineyards, orchards and apricot groves before entering the square that serves as its core. There is a mosque and a teahouse reserved for the men of the village. On the opposite side of the square, the lane shrinks to a pin's width as it meets the green Iceridere River that divides the village. Sheep sometimes overrun these banks, pushing across the humpbacked bridge to rummage in the ghostly caves. The village earns its living from agriculture and, save for a delightful cave hotel, it is blissfully untouched by tourism.



© Samantha Lafferty

Cave dwellings

Outside Ayvali is the **Gomede Valley**, a six-km/four-mile reddish-pink gorge, whose landscape would not be out of place in a Star Wars film. The gorge has several rock churches and is definitely worth an afternoon ramble. Farther south, on the outskirts of the village of Taskinpasa, is **Keslik Monastery**, a collection of caves that were used as a refectory and stables, and the twin ruined churches of St. Stefanos and St. Archanelos.

SOGANLI

Another picturesque hamlet is Soğanli (33 km/20 miles from Ürgüp), dwarfed by its table-top mountain. Soğanli is chiefly known for its pigeon-cotes, small carvings in cliff faces used to attract birds. Local people use the lofts to attract pigeons for their droppings, which are used as fertilizer. The similarly old and altogether more pleasant custom of making colorful cloth dolls is still very much in existence. Village women sell the dolls as part of their wedding dowries.

Soğanli has several rock churches on its outskirts. The **Church of the Black Head** and the **Church of the Snake** are close to the roadside. Some frescoes are still visible, although most have been damaged by graffiti. A short hike down a signposted road will bring you to the **Domed Church** and the **Hidden Church**.

GÜZELYURT ✮

One of the doyennes of Anatolian villages, Güzelyurt is a captivating jumble of stone houses and rundown churches scattered across a hill. Nothing has changed for centuries. Women draw water from fountains and bake bread in ovens at the end of cobbled lanes. Goats and huge brown cows amble about.

© Samantha Lafferty

A primitive church, Güzelyurt

© Samantha Lafferty

One of Güzelyurt's more refined churches

At the end of a lane rising out of the village, a mosque is built into a crevice. Below it is an **underground city** built for the fearless. The city has a system of narrow tunnels with deep shafts used for ventilation and to move from one level to another. You can haul yourself through the tunnels using handholds and footholds gauged out of the crumbling rock. Nearby is **Monastery Valley**, a six km/four mile-long valley littered with rock churches. It is a less striking landscape, yet more eerie than Ilhara Valley.

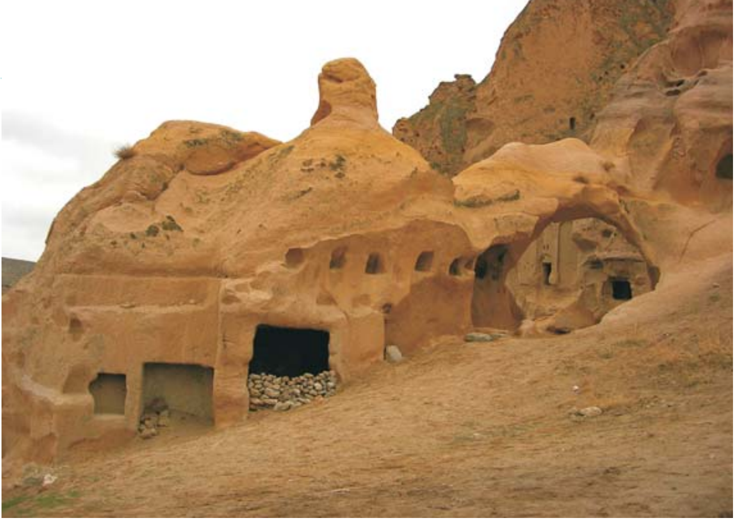
> ***Farmers in Cappadocia use pigeon droppings as a fertilizer for vineyards and orchards. Along the cliffs you will see small carvings where lofts have been made for birds to nest. The strange practice has been used since the late 18th century.***

UNDERGROUND CITIES

The culture of building homes in caves is common across the Mediterranean. But no other region has underground cities as deep or as complex as those in Cappadocia.

It is not clear who first dug into the rocks to create the underground cities. They may have been tunneled by the Hittites as storage areas and later extended by the Christians as refuges from the Romans. Another view is that the Phrygians created them to hide from the Assyrians. One certainty is that they were most actively used by Christians during the long period of persecution, first by the Romans and later during Arab raids.

The underground cities could withstand long periods of siege, supporting large numbers of people who were holed up like termites in a


© Samantha Lafferty

Monastery carved into a hillside

giant anthill. The cities had extensive networks of corridors and tunnels; inclined passages linked family spaces, although there would have been little privacy from hundreds or even thousands of other people in the city. The extent of ancient town planning is remarkable.

Ventilation shafts ran from the top to the bottom of a city, enabling air to circulate. There were areas set aside for food and water storage, stables for animals and even niches for oil lamps. Makeshift crypts were built where the dead could be placed until it was safe to leave the cities to bury them properly. Between the dead, the livestock and the pots used as toilets, the smell must have been repulsive. Often, inhabitants would seal their mouths to stop the spread of disease.

SOLID DOORS

The most cunning feature of the cities were their systems of defense. Carefully balanced millstone doors, weighing 300-500 kg/660-1,100 lbs, were devised to quickly block internal corridors in the event of an attack. These could only be opened from the inside. If an assailant made their way into the caves they could be blocked in a corridor and left to starve to death.

DERINKUYU & KAYMAKLI

Derinkuyu (30 km/19 miles south of Nevsehir) is the largest of Cappadocia's underground cities. It had 12 floors and could harbor as many as 10,000 people during turbulent times. Eight of the floors can be explored. The top floors had a missionary school, kitchens, food stores and wine presses and cellars, and the living quarters. These floors are illuminated and are easy to walk around without too much crawling. Throw a coin down one of the many ventilation shafts to get a sense of their depth. In places, they drop 85 m/280 feet.

During attacks, inhabitants moved to the lower floors where there are hiding places, secret tunnels and the weapons stores. A tunnel on the third floor is believed to lead to neighboring Kaymakli underground city, nine km/six miles north. Kaymakli is another underground web of living chambers, stables, churches and food stores. It is not known how many floors the city has; just four floors are open.

A visit to Cappadocia would not be complete without a trip to either Kaymakli or Derinkuyu (both open daily 8am-6pm; separate entrance fees; *dolmuses* run to the cities from Göreme and Ürgüp), although they may be a daunting prospect for anyone who is claustrophobic.

For travelers with more time, head south of Derinkuyu along Route 765 to **Gümüşler**, about six km before Niğde. The village sits beside a dam of the same name and has more than its share of caravan inns. The real highlight is **Eski Gumuş Monastery** (open daily 9am-6:30pm; entrance fee), a remote and rarely visited cave complex set around a courtyard that is unusually intact. Within the walls are hidden monks' cells and a church painted with some of the region's most spectacular frescoes.

> **TIP:** *Pack a flashlight for exploring the caves and underground cities in Cappadocia.*

ILHARA GORGE ✯✯

Ihara Gorge (40 km/25 miles from Derinkuyu; open everyday 8:30am-7pm in summer, 9am-4pm in winter; entrance fee) is a mesmerizing 14 km/nine mile-long gorge of red and black crags. It was formed by collapsing rocks after the eruption of Mount Hasan, which looms above. The Melendiz River flowed through the cracks, causing further corrosion. Wildflowers grow along the canyon bed and poplar trees spring out from behind fallen rocks. The Ilhara Gorge, which begins at Ilhara and ends at Selime, is particularly

Mount Hasan

Cappadocia's rock formations have been blasted and blown into shape over eons
(© Explore)

peaceful in winter or early spring when the only sound is of the trickling river.

The entrance into the national park (open daily; entrance fee) is down a flight of concrete steps that drop 150 m/490 feet to the canyon bed. The descent gives a tremendous sense of the scale of the valley. There is a trail of cave dwellings, graves and more than 100 churches built into the gorge walls, some of which are connected by tunnels. It could take a full day to walk the length of the gorge and locate the dozen or so churches that are open. To see them all requires some backtracking across the river.

The first church, **Ağaçalti Kilise** (Church under a Tree), is carved into a cliff just before the bottom of the steps. Frescoes from the 11th-13th centuries can be seen on the walls, including one of Daniel in the lion's den. **Sümbüllü Kilise** (Church with the Hyacinth) has paintings from the 14th century. On the opposite side of the bank is **Yilanli Kilise** (Church with the Snake), so called because of its ghastly depiction of sinners being assaulted by snakes. Keep on the same bank but retrace your steps south to **Eğritas Kilise** (Church with a Crooked Stone), which is carved into a jutted fragment of rock and is difficult to reach. The church has several chambers covered with frescoes, albeit faded and damaged.

Cross the river again north of Sümbüllü Kilise and walk to **Kirk Damalti Kilise** (the Church of Forty Roofs), which has a painting of St. George. The next church worth seeing is **Direkli Kilise** (Columned Church), a monastic church with columned aisles and several frescoes. Beyond here, follow the weave of the river to **Selime**, a village built into a valley with mind-boggling cone-shaped rocks and a rock cathedral. To reach the cathedral, climb through an angular tunnel of pinkish rock. Local children will help to locate the cathedral for a small tip.

> **TIP:** *There are some cafés in villages along the gorge, but go prepared with a basic first aid kit, water and a flashlight. Cell phones struggle to work in the depths of the gorge.*

FOLLOW THE OLD SILK ROAD

Long before Route 66 was dubbed a great east-west route, the Silk Road was the ultimate travelers' pass. It started in the Chinese city of Chang'an, modern day Xian, and ran through a host of exotic Asian and Middle Eastern territories, including Cappadocia and Konya, on its way to Istanbul.

Chinese traders used the dusty 4,000-mile route to transport silks, tea, furs, and spices, which they exchanged for gold, silver, precious stones, glass, ivory, horses, and wool. The Silk Road was also a route for the exchange of culture and religion.

Few traders traveled the entire length of the Silk Road. Instead, goods passed along a chain from one trader to another in short segments. Often, the road was dangerous to navigate. Armies used the Silk Road to grab land and pillage countries. The Turks and the Mongols used the road to expand their empires.

The route was improved by the Seljuks, who recognized the wealth that trade could bring. They gave foreigners the same rights to trade as Muslims and offered state protection against robberies and an early form of commercial insurance against damage to merchants' wares. Their successors, the Ottomans, drew enormous wealth from the trade that passed through the country. Anatolia was criss-crossed by routes that ran from Europe via Thrace in the northwest and along the Black Sea Coast to the north. To the south, the road followed the Mediterranean Sea down to Syria via Antakya. Routes also crossed Central Anatolia through Cappadocia and Erzurum into Persia.

The Silk Road lost its importance after Vasco da Gama found a water route between Europe and India. It then became easier to travel between Europe and China by sea. The advent of new technology in Europe meant there was less dependence on China for silk production. The importance of the great road declined after the 19th century.

INNS & CARAVANSARIES

The 200 inns and caravansaries scattered along the long, often desolate Silk Road were magnificent structures resembling castles. These great hulks of buildings ensured the safety of traders and their exotic wares. If that was not enough, the army was on hand.

The inns were built 30-40 km/19-25 miles apart so traders had to walk for no longer than 10 hours before they could rest and eat. The rules of the road meant merchants could stay in one of the upstairs rooms and shelter their camels and horses in the stables below. Merchants were fed two meals a day and could bathe and pray. The caravansaries had the services of a vet, doctor and a blacksmith. All of the merchants' expenses were covered by foundations.

Today, many of the inns and caravansaries have been left to deteriorate. Their roofs are missing and weeds and flowers climb the stone walls. Fortunately, renewed interest from modern-day travelers in the Silk Road means some have become hotels and restaurants.

TURKEY'S BEST INNS & CARAVANSARIES

Sari Han is five km/three miles east of Avanos on the Kayseri-Aksaray road in Cappadocia. It is a Seljuk caravansary built in 1238.

Ağzikara Han (also known as Hoca Mesut Caravansary) is another Seljuk building on the Aksaray-Nevsehir road.

Sultan Han, on the Aksaray-Konya road, is the biggest Seljuk caravansary in Anatolia.

Alara Han was built in 1230 at the mouth of the Alara River, close to the Alanya-Antalya road. It has been turned into a bazaar.

Rustem Paşa Caravansary in Edirne was built by the Ottoman Chief Architect Sinan. It now serves as a hotel.

Cinci Han in Safranbolu also was revived and turned into a hotel and restaurant in 2004. The inn has a commanding position in the middle of the bazaar.

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON WHEELS

One way to beat the crowds and see more remote areas of Cappadocia is on a quad bike. **Turkey Heritage Travel** (☎ 0384-271 2687, www.goreme.com) has guided tours ($45 for two hours) roaming across hill and valley trails. The bikes are fully automatic and no experience is required.

CYCLING TOURS

Cappadocia lends itself beautifully to cycling. Coarse farm tracks and bumpy canyon paths offer a chance to really get off-road and test your cycling brain as well as your legs. Once inside the weave of Cappadocian villages, the trails are totally bespoke and can be cherry-picked depending on the historical sites you want to see.

As in other regions of Turkey, finding a good trail bike is the main challenge. Guided tours are the way to guarantee a finely-tuned bike with a support vehicle to mend any busted tires. Some tour companies also offer bike hire for self-guided treks. Theft is rare in these parts, so you can lean your bike up against a rock church or underground city and take a look around without fear of a long walk home.

To bike around the main sites in Cappadocia, plan a one or two-day ride looping from **Ürgüp** around some of the region's most prominent villages and open-air museums. From Ürgüp, follow a forested dirt track alongside Damsa stream, a tributary of Kizilirmak River, and swing past Sari Han caravansaray. Turn west to **Avanos**, known for its ancient potteries, and then south to **Çavuşin** and the **Göreme Valley** before riding along rough terrain out to the towering cave dwellings of **Üçhisar** and **Ortahisar**. Alternately, make a short, dramatic ride through **Red Valley** (Kizilcukur Vadisi) between **Çavuşin** and Üçhisar.

Another interesting ride weaves together the villages south of Ürgüp. Starting on tarmac, head south to **Pancarlik**, **Mustafapaşa**, **Ayvali** and **Damsa Baraji** (Damsa Dam), before seeking out the many churches in the valleys around **Soğanli** and heading west to the underground city of **Derinkuyu**.

Get off-road for a 70-km/43-mile ride from Gölcük to Güzelyurt. From **Gölcük**, follow a minor road to **Baglama**, where the trail goes

Opposite: Cappadocia is great cycling country (© Explore)

off-road as it climbs to the mountain village of **Cinarli**. Ride down to **Çiftlik** and on to **Güzelyurt**, keeping on dirt tracks via Çardak and Sivrihisar.

The 150 m/490 foot-deep **Ilhara Valley** canyon between Ilhara and Selime is Cappadocia's best singletrack ride. The rough, narrow path through the valley weaves its way along dry, thorny vegetation, which can be the enemy of bike tires. Then, there are giant boulders that need to be negotiated. Cycling here is technical and challenging; be prepared to carry your bike over difficult sections of the 14-km/nine-mile trail. The best way into the valley is via Alanyurt to Selime and then cycling down to Ilhara village.

> **TIP:** *Cappadocia can be hot in summer and covered in snow in winter, so the best times to cycle are early spring and late autumn. Make an early start to avoid sharing the path with too many trekkers.*

Extend the ride by making the 35-km/22-mile crossing of **Kücük Hasan Mountain**, which looms in the distance. A dirt path leads from Kitreli, over a steep summit and descends into the village of Akcaoren, near Altinhisar.

Guided Tours

One of the best short-distance treks is the **Cappadocia Freewheel**, a six-day, 130-km/80-mile bikefest across the wild, rocky landscape between Ilhara Valley and Ürgüp. The route follows a mixture of farm tracks and quiet lanes through Ilhara, Red and Rose valleys, Üçhisar, Mustafapaşa, Ürgüp and the underground city of Kaymakli. It has gentle climbs and descents, but mostly the fun comes from mastering the tricky terrain. Several companies package this tour, including the **Adventure Center** (US ☎ 800-228-8747, www.adventurecenter.com). The tour costs $730, including bikes, accommodation, meals and guide.

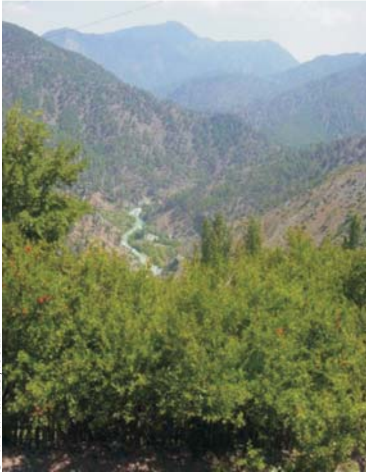
A tougher ride can be found on **KE Adventure Travel's Turkish Delight** trip (US ☎ 800-497-9675, www.keadventure.com). This is seven days of riding, mostly off-road, covering a total distance of 400 km/250 miles. Not billed as being a particularly technical ride, the emphasis is on knitting together the historical highlights of Cappadocia, including Ortahisar, Avanos, Üçhisar, Soğanli, Derinkuyu, Güzelyurt, Ilhara Valley and Göreme. Riders should expect to have some saddle sores by covering 30-70 km/18-44 miles a day. And you must bring your own serviced mountain bike, preferably with front suspension. The trip costs about $1,500, inclusive of meals, accommodation, guide and support vehicle.

Argeus Travel (☎ 0384-3414688, www.argeus.com.tr) also has a seven-day trek that covers 385 km/240 miles and sticks to dirt trails for the majority of the route. It encompasses the region's most famous landmarks, including Ortahisar, Ürgüp Castle, Avanos, the phallic cones of Love Valley, the underground city of Derinkuyu and Ilhara Valley. The off-road nature of the route means riders pass through a whole host of off-the-beaten-track villages on their way to the big attractions. The tour starts at $1,175 for groups of 13 or more. That includes accommodation (hotels and camping) and meals, domestic flights and transfers, guide and support vehicle.

ADVENTURES ON WATER

RAFTING

The **Zamanti River** at Yahyali near Kayseri has 21 km/13 miles of fast-flowing rapids, although only 13 km/eight miles are suitable for rafting. Eight routes have rapids to give experienced rafters a few thrills. The grading on the river is Class I-IV. May through July is the best time to take to the water, with enough high water to spin a raft. **Medraft** (☎ 0242-3125770, www.medraft.com) is the most professional company rafting here.


© wowturkey.com

Zamanti River

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

TREKKING

Along with cyclists, hikers will find the ever-changing Cappadocian scenery a gift. It would be difficult to plan a route that did not beguile even the hardiest of trekkers. Hiking in these parts is generally quite easy, with plenty of good dirt paths leading through undulating valleys.

The best treks can be found in **Red Valley** (Kizilcukur Vadisi), which cuts through the center of Cappadocia between **Çavuşin** and Ortahisar, and in **Ilhara Valley**, where you have the added incentive of discovering the churches hidden in a cliff face. Start your walk at the Ilhara village end of the valley and walk through to Selime, where you can climb to the monastery.

A walk through **Pigeon Valley** (Güvercinlik Vadisi) between Üçhisar and Göreme gives a sweeping view of the Göreme Valley once the road drops down beyond Üçhisar Castle. Another option is to take a *dolmus* to Mustafapaşa and hike through **Gomede Valley** to Ayvali. From here, you can make a second day trek to the rural villages of Bahçeli and Kavak and finish in Ortahisar.

© Middle Earth Travel

Examining the pigeon cotes

Several tour companies arrange trekking tours through the region. **Middle Earth Travel** has five one-day guided treks between April and November and also organizes one-week trekking tours. ☎ 0384-2712559, www.middleearthtravel.com.

Other reputable trekking firms include **Explore Worldwide** (www.explore.co.uk) and **Sherpa Expeditions** (www.sherpa-walking-holidays.co.uk), which both have multi-day walking tours in Cappadocia and the higher reaches of the Taurus Mountains.

CLIMBING

Now dormant **Mount Erciyes** once had eruptions so powerful that they redesigned the entire Cappadocian topography. The mountain is the highest peak in Central Anatolia, rising to 3,916 m/12,850 feet, and its summit is often drenched in snow. Climbing here has been seen as a challenge worth taking since W.J. Hamilton first made the ascent in 1837.

Mount Erciyes

Climbers have to contend with a 700-m/2,300-foot mountain glacier on the eastern slope and the risk of falling rocks in summer and avalanches in winter. The best times for climbing are between May and October.

The easiest ascent is up the **Tekir Plateau**, where there is a ski resort in winter. From this mountain resort (25 km/16 miles from Kayseri), climbing to the summit and back takes about 10 hours and is best split into two days with a camp made on one of the plateaus such as Sut Donduran. The northwest flank is a more difficult and yet more scenic route. Orchards and vineyards give way to vast meadows. Middle Earth Travel (see above) has two-day expeditions to the summit of Erciyes Daği ($220).

ABSEILING

For those who get more of a thrill from going down the mountain than climbing up it, you can abseil down a 62-m/200-foot Roman tomb in **Ortahisar**. Middle Earth Travel (as above) has abseiling trips every day between April and November ($50 for two descents).

ADVENTURES ON SNOW

SNOWSHOEING

The Cappadocian landscape becomes even more wondrous in winter when snow covets its rock cones. In a bad winter, it may be the only way to see the fairy chimneys. All it takes is a fair bit of fitness and some practice to master the technique of walking on the snow. **Kirkit Voyage** in Avanos (☎ 0384-5113259, www.kirkit.com) and **Middle Earth Travel** in Göreme (☎ 0384-2712528, www.middleearthtravel.com) lead snowshoe treks in January and February.

SKIING

Arguably the most see-and-be-seen of Turkey's ski resorts, **Erciyes Ski Center** (25 km/16 miles from Kayseri) sits on the dormant volcanic mountain. The drive out to the resort is interesting in itself. As you climb the mountain, the dull steppe of the Kayseri plains falls away and Cappadocian rock cones come into view.

The ski center is becoming the country's premier resort because of the quality of its powdery snow and the choice of ski runs. They begin at

2,200 m/7,200 feet, with the summit rising to 3,300 m/10,800 feet. As well as downhill skiing, you can try your hand at snowboarding, heli-skiing and even snow-rafting, a hair-raising slide down the mountain in a rafting boat.

The ski season runs from mid-November until April. The high altitude means the weather at Erciyes is typically clear and sunny. Equipment can be hired at the resort and lessons are available. The thing that really sets the resort apart is the Cappadocian landscape.

ADVENTURES IN THE AIR

HOT AIR BALLOONING ☆☆

Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The Cappadocian scenery is extraordinary from the ground, but from the air it is astounding. No roof terrace or mountaintop can eclipse the feeling of watching the rock-hewn wilderness from a hot air balloon, which skims so close to the volcanic rocks you can almost crumble the tufa in your hand and push over the black crowns that sit so precariously on top. Somewhere in the distance are Üçhisar, Avanos and Göreme Valley. Over your shoulder are the Red and Rose valleys, deep gorges of crimson rock. Years of rushing winds have carved uneven horizontal stripes on the rocks and they resemble the swirl of waves on an ocean.

The excitement builds from the moment you arrive in the launch field and watch the giant balloon being unfurled and hitched up to the wicker basket. Once the passengers have climbed inside the surprisingly tight basket, the pilot gives a safety briefing. This involves preparing for a fast descent and assuming the landing position: squat and grip the safety ropes inside the basket. The odds are that you will be too groggy from the 5am start to reach a fever pitch of fear. A shout to the ground crew and the guide ropes are released. The balloon glides off the ground aided by a gusting blue flame. All of a sudden you have left the world behind and are drifting above a thousand twisted rock cones as the sun rises in the ginger sky.

The growing popularity of hot air balloon rides means there are likely to be several balloons bobbing about in the same patch of sky. Sometimes the balloons kiss; at others, a blast of hot air steers one balloon over the other.

After more than an hour drifting through the folds of rock, an elevated patch of grass appears that serves as the landing platform. From this height it looks like an impossible descent. Then, depending on your pilot, things can become very interesting. Some pilots have a penchant for landing on the back of the trailer tagged up to the support jeep. For the passenger, this is heart-stopping exhilaration. To descend, the pilot tugs at the cords that open flaps at the top of the balloon to let out hot air. The precision and ease of the landing are quite amazing.

Whether you opt for a budget or a luxury package, it will make a large hole in your wallet. Whatever you need to scrimp on to pay for the trip, you will not regret it.

Kapadokya Balloons (Adnan Menderes Caddesi 14/A, Göreme, ☎ 0384-2712442, www.kapadokyaballoons.com) is run by Lars and Kaili who have been flying hot air balloons in Europe for more than 20 years. Lars involved with Richard Branson's attempt to cross the Atlantic in a balloon. But do not hold that against him. The company is ultra professional with an unblemished safety record.

The Classic Deluxe flight enables you to see landscape for longer, with fewer

© Kapadokya Balloons

companions. The landing is marked with a "Cloud 9 Cocktail." The excursion costs between $260 and $290, depending on whether you pay with cash or a credit card. A Budget flight lasts almost an hour and costs between $170 and $190.

© Göreme Balloons

Another reliable outfit is **Göreme Balloons** (Sivritas Mahallesi, Elgin Sokak 2, Ürgüp, ☎ 0384-3415662, www.goremeballoons.com), which has a 1½-hour flight with a maximum of 12 people costing $290. The one-hour flight costs $200. Both tours have champagne and breakfast thrown in.

ADVENTURES ON HORSEBACK

Akhal-Teke Horse Riding Center (Camikebir Mahallesi, Kadi Sokak 1, Avanos, ☎ 0384-5115171, www.akhal-tekehorsecenter.com) is the oldest and largest ranch in the region with 30 horses. Run by an American team, it offers a variety of treks, from a one-hour ramble along the banks of Kizilirmak River ($20) to a four-hour ride to Zelve and **Çavuşin** ($80). Full-day horseback riding tours around Cappadocia cost $120. For the cowboys among you, the ranch also runs seven-day riding and camping expeditions around lesser-known villages and a section of the Silk Road.

© Akhal-Teke

ECO-ADVENTURES

BIRDING

The **Sultan Sazligi** (Sultan Marshes) near Niğde is a basin around two small lakes covered in reed and cane. The lakes are saltwater and the marshes are freshwater, giving a combination of habitats for birdlife. The location is also on an important migratory route. The marshes are famed for their flamingo population and twitchers claim the edge of the lake turns pink in a cloud of the leggy birds. Unfortunately, flamingoes are becoming increasingly difficult to spot in this region. Instead, birders are more likely to see pelicans, herons and cranes. There are even some golden eagles in the surrounding steppes.

Tours to the marshes can be booked from travel agencies in Ürgüp, Göreme and Avanos. If you plan to visit independently, the village of Ovaçiftlik is the best bet for accommodation. Wear sturdy walking shoes, as there can be snakes in the long grass.

CULTURAL ADVENTURES

COOKERY & WINE TOURS

Turasan (☎ 0384-3414961, www.turasan.com.tr) is a boutique wine company with several award-winning labels produced from its two vineyards. Its wines have been the favored choice of visiting dignitaries. The company runs tours of its vats and cellars, which are in underground caves where the temperature remains constant year-round. Turasan was started in 1943 and is now run by the third-generation of the same family. The oldest bottle in the cellar is from 1944. A visit would not be complete without sampling some of the wines sold at its storehouse.

Cappadocian cuisine is rated highly across the country and now, thanks to the Museum Hotel in Üçhisar, you can learn the tricks of preparing some of these dishes. The weekend course, run by the hotel's chef, teaches participants how to cook *mezes*, soups and also traditional Tandir dishes in an open pit oven. Lessons can be booked via **Matiana Travel** (US ☎ 866-978-6360, www.matiana.com.tr).

KILIM WEAVING

Not so long ago, every Turkish girl needed to learn the art of weaving a beautiful kilim if she wanted to find a good husband. Now, women make rugs more as a way of supporting their families than as proof of their worth as a potential bride. The intricacy of weaving is no less impressive. Traditional methods are still used and each rug can take months to finish.

In comparison, 15 days does not seem sufficient to teach a complete beginner this ancient skill, but **Turkish Heritage Travel** (☎ 0384-2712687, www.goreme.com) has a tour that attempts to do just that. At least it will give a flavor of the life of different women in the region. The first few days is spent with nomadic women learning about the dying process and watching them weave. Then the lessons moves to a cave house in Göreme where there is a chance to make your own kilim – with some supervision. The tour costs $2,100 including accommodation and meals, transfers and a guide.

SHOPPING

Avanos pottery woman

Cappadocia has a long tradition of producing **carpets** and handicrafts. In Soğanli, local girls make brightly colored **cloth dolls** as part of their dowries which they sell at the roadside. Simple red clay pots and more expensive hand-painted vases and plates are sold all over Cappadocia, but they are most prevalent at the potteries of Avanos. **Pottery** is mainly produced on electric wheels these days, although factories such as **Kaya Seramik** in Avanos (☎ 0384-5115755) have old-fashioned kick-wheels for tourists to try their hands at the art.

Carpet weaving is another contributor to the Cappadocian economy. If you want to shop for a carpet, visit one of the co-operatives, which enable women to almost be self-employed. They work at home and sell their carpets to the factories.

NIGHTLIFE

Asimin Yeri (Asim's Place), Esbelli Mahallesi 24, Ürgüp, ☎ 0384-3412867, www.asiminyeri.com.tr. The club is popular with Turks who come for the live Turkish music in the bar-disco. Expect the raki to flow and the dancing to be energetic.

Prokopi, Cumhuriyet Meydani 26, Ürgüp, ☎ 0384-3416498, www.prokopi.com, is set in an old Greek house filled with antiques. In winter, there is a laid-back atmosphere around the roaring fire. The rooftop garden is open during the summer. Live music at weekends.

WHERE TO STAY

Costs given are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

HOTEL PRICES	
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Opposite: Kilims (© Valery Shanin/Dreamstime)

AVANOS

Kirkit Pension, Avanos, ☎ 0384-5113148, www.kirkit.com, is set within a large stone house set partly into the cave. The dining room is completely carved into the cave wall. Nineteen rooms have rustic, earthy features. $

AYVALI

AUTHOR PICK: Gamirasu Cave Hotel, Ayvali, ☎ 0384-3415825, www.gamirasu.com, is one of Cappadocia's gems. Ayvali has been untouched by tourism and the hotel owner, Ibrahim, does much to keep the spirit of the village alive. Some of the rooms are caves built into the gorge that runs through the village; others are part of a stone house. Gamirasu has a real home-from-home atmosphere with Ibrahim, his family and staff enjoying dinner with their guests. The restaurant boasts one of the region's top chefs who also runs cookery lessons. $$

© Gamirasu Cave

GÖREME

Cappadocia Cave Suites, Gafferli Mahallesi, Unlu Sokak 19, ☎ 0384-2712800, www.cappadociacavesuites.com. The rock complex in which the hotel sits is so extensive that it should be opened as a museum rather than a hotel. Odd-shaped rock-hewed chimneys have been transformed into 18 luxury guest rooms, including five suites. The suites have separate lounges with open fireplaces and espresso machines. Like every well-planned boutique hotel, there are terraces and hiding places for you to sneak away and enjoy the view. $$$

Kelebek Pension, Aydinli Mahallesi, ☎ 0384-2712531, www.kelebekhotel.com. Formerly a family home, the Kelebek has a mixture of caves and stone-arched rooms with panoramic views of the valley. Over time, the owners have used the 16 rooms to raise pigeons, to store grapes and to house a library. Now, they feature en-suite bathrooms and satellite TV. Tours can be booked at the hotel. $$

© Kelebek Pension

Kose Pension, ☎ 0384-2712294, www.kosepension.com. This purpose-built house and its swimming pool are a favorite with backpackers, even though it is set in a quiet area of the village. There is an indoor restaurant and, in summer, a nomadic tent is set up for evenings under the stars. Dormitories and private rooms. $

GÜZELYURT

AUTHOR PICK: **Hotel Karballa**, ☎ 0382-4512103, www.kirkit.com, occupies a former Greek Orthodox theology school. It sits back from the village on a hill and has extensive gardens and a pool. Inside, the corridors are long with barrel-vaulted ceilings and heavy wooden floors that bang and creak, all befitting an ancient church building. The 20 rooms are spacious and some are dormitory style. The hotel is owned by the Kirkit travel agency, which organizes outdoor tours, including rafting and trekking. $

ÜÇHISAR

AUTHOR PICK: **Museum Hotel**, Tekeli Mahallesi 1, ☎ 0384-2192220, www.museum-hotel.com. Cut into part of the giant honeycombed rock castle in Üçhisar, the hotel is a labyrinth of caves connected by intimate corridors and filled with antique furniture and kilims, hence the name. The caves come complete with pigeon cotes and wine stores. There is an outdoor pool to relax in after a long day of walking. $$$

© Museum Hotel

ÜRGÜP

© Asia Minor Hotel

Asia Minor Otel, Istiklal Caddesi 38, ☎ 0384-3414645, www.cappadociahouse.com, occupies a 200-year-old Greek house in the center of Ürgüp. Its eight pretty rooms are typically decorated with heavy wooden furniture and white-fringed bed linen. Guests can use the laundry and the kitchen. $

AUTHOR PICK: **Yunak Evleri**, Yunak Mahallesi, ☎ 0384-3416920, www.yunak.com. The owners of Yunak took a luxury hotel and transported it into a warren of milky-white fifth-century caves on the outskirts of Ürgüp. The restoration is so sympathetic it hardly distracts from the natural environment. The main house has two sitting rooms each laid out with stylish antiques and a stereo where guests can lounge and listen to something from the large catalogue of music. Opposite, in a separate building, is the dramatic dining room, which features swirling velvet curtains, tall fireplaces and low candelabras. Another gated entrance outside leads to the cave rooms. Any girl (or boy) who wants to fulfill their Princess and the Pea desires will instantly fall in love with the rooms. Huge wrought iron beds lie under the low rock ceilings and are accompanied by antique kilims and beautiful wooden chests handpicked from all over Turkey. All rooms have their own CD players, so you can play something sultry while lying in the Jacuzzi bathtub. $$$

© Yunak Evleri

WHERE TO EAT

AVANOS

Bizim Ev Restaurant, Orta Mahallesi, Baklaci Sokak 1, ☎ 0384-5115525. Huge portions of home-cooked local food are dished up in the stone-arched rooms of this old house. You can eat in one of the cozy nooks and crannies or Ottoman-style on low seating. There is also a roof terrace. $$

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

GÖREME

Alaturca, Göreme Kasabasi, ☎ 0384-2712882, is considered the region's foremost gourmet experience. It certainly wins the prize for the most extensive menu with a choice of 60 Anatolian dishes and a long wine and cocktail list. There is a tasteful indoor dining room and a large garden with oversized funky cushions to laze on. $$

MUSTAFAPASA

Old Greek House, ☎ 0384-3535306, www.oldgreekhouse.com, oldgreekhouse@superonline.com. This rambling 19th-century Greek home retains all of its original features, including fine metalwork around the windows and murals on the walls. That is where the Greek influence ends. The menu is distinctly Turkish with *mezes*, kebabs and regional specialties. $$

© Old Greek House

ÜÇHISAR

Elai Restaurant, ☎ 0384-2193181. Elai's former incarnations include the local teashop and, more interestingly, a Guve Hamami, the place where a groom and his party would bathe and prepare for his wedding. The restaurant is built into the stone on the lower slopes of Üçhisar Castle. The terrace gives striking views across the valley. $$

ÜRGÜP

Ahra Restaurant, ☎ 0384-3413454, www.ahra.8m.com. A small restaurant in the middle of Ürgüp, Ahra uses fresh local produce in its home-cooked dishes like *manti* (Turkish ravioli) and *yufka boregi* (pancake with cheese). $$

© Somine Restaurant

Somine Café & Restaurant, Cumhuriet Meydani, ☎ 0384-3418442, www.sominerestaurant.com, is an upmarket restaurant in the center of a small mall of shops and cafés. The specialty is a lamb kebab cooked in a red clay pot on an open oven. The pots are then smashed open at the table. $$$

Black Sea Coast

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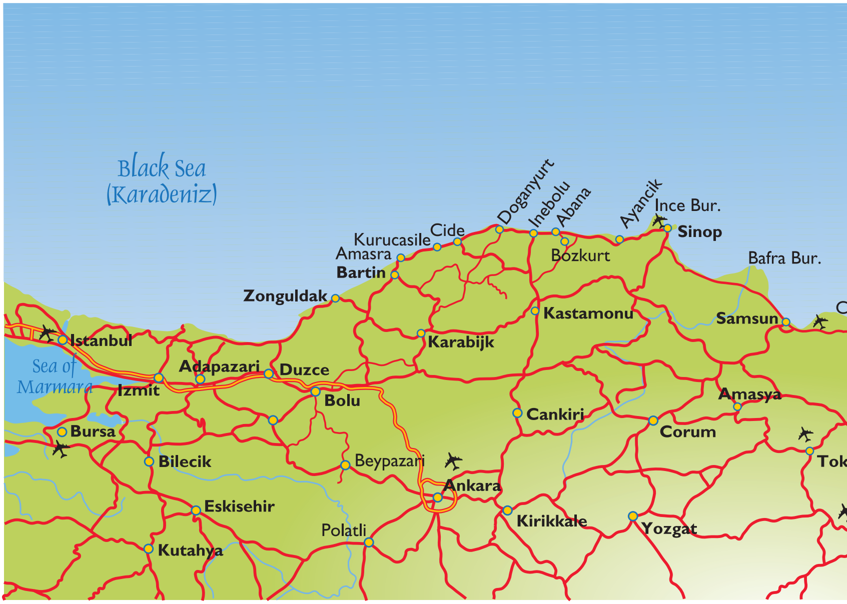
Stretching from the European border with Bulgaria to the former Russian enclave of Georgia, the Black Sea Coast has miles of deserted beaches, a weave of green hills and the most gregarious people in the country.

For centuries it was a coastline isolated by its mountains until Greek traders settled there. The myth of Jason and his powerful Argonauts was dreamed up along these shores. These days, there are few signs of Greek influence. Instead, it is the American military that has left its mark. Americans brought blue jeans and a laid-back atmosphere to towns such as Sinop, where they were stationed. They also pumped their dollars into the region and many local people still bemoan their exit.

Communist Russians, who made the cheap passage to seaside resorts across the Black Sea, filled the gap left by the Americans. Those who made money after the fall of Communism took their wealth to warmer climates along the Mediterranean Coast. Trade with Russia is still thriving, witnessed by the constant stream of trucks that fly down the coastal highway in the east. Much of this business comes from the fields. The fertile soil and heavy rainfall produces vast quantities of hazelnuts, tea, tobacco and maize.

Ever industrious and creative, Black Sea people refuse to let their tourist industry die. The region is trying to reinvent itself as an adventure travel destination. There are fast-flowing rivers for rafting, mountains for climbing and skiing, and pastures for trekking.

Opposite: Cliff monastery of Sumela (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)


Black Sea
(Karadeniz)
Sea of
Marmara
Istanbul
Izmit
Adapazari
Duzce
Bolu
Bursa
Bilecik
Eskisehir
Kutahya
Zonguldak
Bartin
Amasra
Kurucasile
Cide
Doganyurt
Inebolu
Abana
Bozkurt
Ayancik
Ince Bur.
Sinop
Bafra Bur.
Samsun
Kastamonu
Karabijk
Cankiri
Corum
Amasya
Tok
Beypazari
Ankara
Polatli
Kirikkale
Yozgat

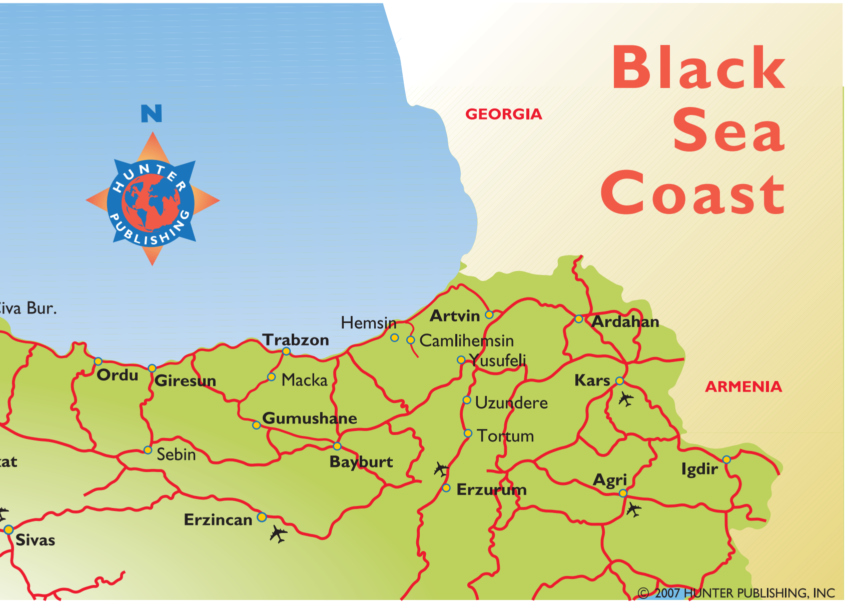
GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY AIR

Turkish Airlines operates daily flights from Istanbul to **Samsun Airport** (SSX, ☎ 0362-8448830), about halfway along the Black Sea Coast, and to **Trabzon Airport** (TZX, ☎ 0462-3257080) at the eastern end. Trabzon is the largest airport in the region.

GETTING TO THE DOWNTOWN AREA

A **Havaş shuttle bus** (☎ 444-0-487 in Turkey; www.havas.com.tr) goes from Samsun Airport to Cumhuriyet Meydani in the city (19 km/12 miles). A one-way trip costs $4. Trabzon Airport is eight km/five miles east of the city center and in the absence of a Havaş bus, a taxi is best option. Onward bus and train connections can be found from Samsun and Trabzon to destinations along the Black Sea Coast and other regions in Turkey.


Black Sea Coast
GEORGIA
ARMENIA
N
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Trabzon
Hemsin
Artvin
Camlihemsin
Yusufeli
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Giresun
Macka
Gumushane
Uzundere
Tortum
Sebin
Bayburt
Erzurum
Agri
Igdir
Erzincan
Sivas
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MAIN ROADS

From Istanbul, **E-80** is the main artery through the interior of the Black Sea region. If you are driving from Ankara to the Black Sea, take **E-89** and switch to **E-80** when the roads link up outside Gerede in the direction of Karabuk. The **D-010** runs almost the entire length of the Black Sea Coast and would make a great trip for anyone with the skill and time to handle the switches of speed from the roaring highway outside Istanbul, to precipitous hairpins between Amasra and Bafra and then back to juggernaut-dodging beyond Samsun. A new highway is being built along the eastern reaches of the coast that promises to bring even more traffic.

BY TRAIN

Trains are not an efficient way of getting around the Black Sea Coast. The railway network is limited and will undoubtedly involve taking some bus trips. Trains take 11 hours to wind their way from Istanbul to **Sivas**, which offers slow trains to **Samsun**. Unless you do not like to fly and cannot stand being on a long bus trip, avoid the train.

BY BUS

Buses rule this stretch of coast, or at least they hold their own against the thundering roar of trucks heading back and forth between the Georgian border and Istanbul. The journey by bus from Istanbul to **Safranbolu** takes six hours. Buses only go as far as Karabuk, where you have to switch to a minibus for the last 20 minutes to Safranbolu. Big bus companies (Metro, Ulusoy and Guven Turizm) have their own service to make the rest of the trip and your ticket will be valid for the entire journey. Similarly, to reach the coastal town of **Amasra**, directly north of Safranbolu, you need to change at Bartin (17 km/11 miles away). Intercity buses run from Karabuk to Kastamonu (two hours).

The trip from Istanbul to **Sinop** takes 13 hours. Bus services are frequent from Sinop to the bus stations in **Samsun** (☎ 0362-2381706; three hours) and **Trabzon** (☎ 0462-3252343; nine hours). Unless you plan to get off the bus to explore along the way, take a plane between Istanbul and Trabzon.

BY TAXI & *DOLMUS*

Taxis are readily available in large towns such as Sinop and Amasya, and in all the Black Sea cities. They can usually be found at bus and train stations. If you plan to take excursions by taxi to see rural villages, ask a hotel clerk to recommend a company (this may turn out to be a cousin or friend) and negotiate the price.

Dolmus buses link towns, villages and city suburbs all along the Black Sea Coast. However, if you plan to travel by bus along the stretch between Amasra and Bafra, be warned you will be in for a bumpy, long and probably frustrating journey. Although sections are magnificent, the point-to-point minibuses will take days to get you there. Unless you have lots of time, plan to zigzag back and forth from the interior to the coast on the intercity bus. For the sake of your bottom, it is worth the additional few dollars.

Along the eastern section of the coast, *dolmuses* run between Trabzon and Maçka for the Sumela Monastery and also to Uzungöl for the lake. They also go out to the hillside town of Ayder and Artvin.

SIGHTSEEING

The Black Sea's coastal towns begin outside Istanbul, but large swathes of this coast are overdeveloped and, in summer, overcrowded with

© Samantha Lafferty

Fishing boats ready for work in Gerze

Turkish city dwellers. If you plan to drive from Istanbul through the Black Sea region, head inland along E-80 to the town of **Bolu** and then swing up through **Karabuk** to glorious **Safranbolu** (390 km/242 miles).

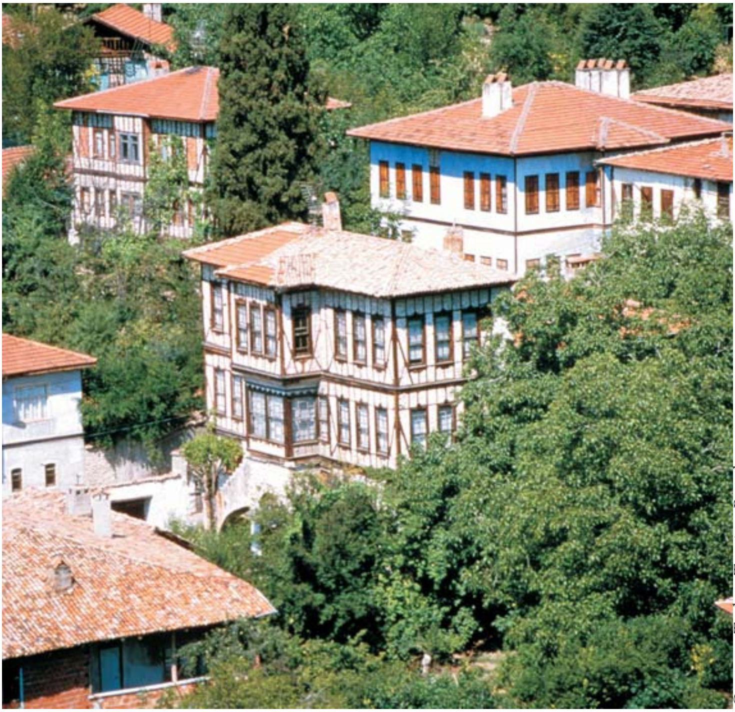
SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (✪) are worth a visit. Two stars (✪✪) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (✪✪✪), just do it. You won't be sorry.

SAFRANBOLU ✪✪

Safranbolu takes its name from the saffron fields that surrounded the town in the 19th century. The saffron business is now confined to the fields around Davutobasi (20 km/12 miles away), but its importance to the town is characterized by the giant model of a saffron flower in the center of the Kiranköy district.

Kiranköy, with its shops, budget restaurants and cinema, is the least interesting of the town's three districts. Up the hill from Kiranköy is **Bağlar**, with its wonderful collection of 19th-century Ottoman houses, many in grand gardens. There is a restored watermill in the



Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Safranbolu's beautiful hillside mansions

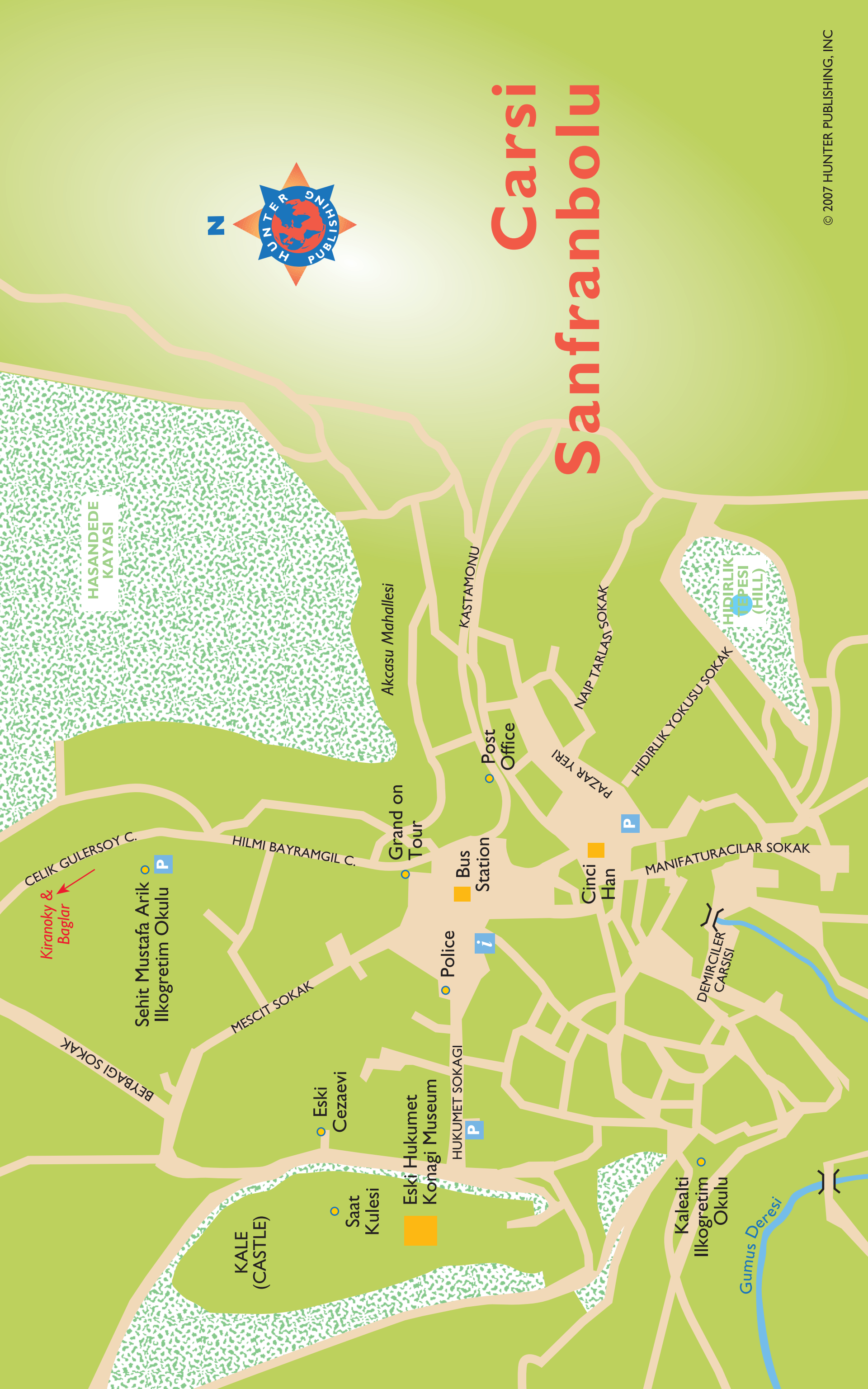
center of the village. This is where the town's wealthy families move to in the summer to escape the heat.

CARSI

At the base of the hill beyond Kiranköy is Çarşi, the beautiful bazaar quarter, which has the largest collection of black-timber, whitewashed Ottoman mansions in the country. The area is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and more than 800 of its most beautiful houses have been restored. Some of the houses are open as museums and others as hotels. Plan to visit **Havuzlu Asmazlar Konak**, now a hotel on Mescit Sokak, which has the original marble fountain in the main salon. Architecturally, this is the most striking of all the houses. Also worth a visit are **Karauzumler** and **Paşa mansions** close by.

The houses in **Safranbolu** are particularly grand because of the tremendous wealth generated from trade along the caravan route, which passed through the town on its way from the Black Sea port of Sinop to Istanbul. As well as saffron and other spices, the town is known for

Carsi Sanfranbolu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HASANDEDE KAYASI
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KASTAMONU
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Eski Hukumet Konagi Museum
Saat Kulesi
KALE (CASTLE)
Kalealti Ilkogretim Okulu
Gumus Deresi

© 2007 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Black-timber, whitewashed mansions

its leather, lumber and iron craftsmanship. It also produces the best Turkish Delight in the country.

Cinci Inn, the imposing caravansary in the center of the bazaar, is evidence of the town's importance as a lodging place along the route. The inn, which is now a hotel, was built in 1645 by Cinci Hoja, a high-ranking Ottoman judge who later fell out of favor with the sultan and was executed. Cinci Hoja was a man of exquisite taste. His marble Turkish bath, Cinci Hamam in the main square, is arguably the most beautiful ever built outside a palace.

Climb to the **castle ruins** on Hidirlik Tepesi (Hidirlik Hill), where you can look down on Safranbolu's mansions and across to the clock tower and grand yellow-painted government building, Eski Hukumet Konaği. The mansion is being transformed into a museum with artifacts donated by local people. On the slope of Hidirlik Yolu is **Kaymakamlar Musezi** (open 9am-6pm; entrance fee), a lovely house with a small ethnography museum. Staying in the same area, cross a small stream below the Izzet Mehmet Paşa Camii to the dark arches of the **Blacksmiths' Market**, where craftsmen still make copper pots.

Pergamon, an ancient city in western Turkey, had more than 200,000 books in its celebrated library, second only to that in Alexandria, Egypt.

Clear waters of the Black Sea (© Samantha Lafferty)

ONWARD FROM SAFRANBOLU

After Safranbolu, there are two possible itineraries: the coastal route goes 100 km/62 miles north to Amasra and follows a string of rocky beachheads reminiscent of the Big Sur in California. A narrow road winds dangerously close to the edge of cliffs that plunge straight down into the pouncing surf. The only way to enjoy the ride east between Amasra and Bafra is in a car. The inland route heads east through the towns of Kastamonu, Amasya and Tokat. If you plan to see a mix of the coast and the inland towns – and you should – plan a route that zigzags from Safranbolu to Amasra, drive along the coast to Inebolu and down to Kastamonu, stopping briefly at Kasaba. Then head northeast to Sinop and continue along the coast to Bafra before dropping south to Amasya and Tokat, rejoining the coast in Samsun.

AMASRA & THE COASTAL ROUTE

Amasra is a pretty, if forlorn-looking fishing town jutting out into the Black Sea. The town's fortunes faded, along with other towns along the Black Sea Coast, as wealthier Russian tourists headed elsewhere. The paint is peeling off the guesthouses that sit on cliffs above two sandy beaches. Amasra relies on its fishing industry and a flock of Istanbul day-trippers who come for the seafood restaurants.

The guesthouses offer a good place to sit and watch fishing trawlers going out to work. Seagulls follow the trail of boats out to sea and cats sit on the dockside awaiting their return. On a rocky promontory above the harbor are the ramparts of a Byzantine **citadel**, inside of which is an old church since converted into the Fatih Mosque. The necropolis dates from the Roman period.

Outside Amasra, the scenery is more dramatic. **Cide**, **Inebolu** and **Ayancik** are the main resorts, with sand and shingle beaches and year-round accommodation. Ayancik, in particular, is worth a stop for a hike around its clear lake and towering forests.

> **TIP:** *Keep loose change handy. Turkey is a cheap country and you will not be appreciated at the market or on the bus if you have only large notes.*

© Samantha Lafferty

One of Sinop's fjords

SINOP

On the flanks of a protruding cliff is Sinop, the coast's most northerly town. It is enclosed by mountains that form the region's only natural harbor and protect it from the harsh Siberian winds that tear along other stretches of the coast.

> *Sinop boasts a number of other historical and geographical distinctions. It ranks as the oldest town in the region having been used a port as early as Hittite times for the capital of Hattusa. By the eighth century, Sinop was chosen for the largest Milanese colony. It remained the coast's most prominent port under the command of Genoese traders. That ended when the Ottomans captured it in the mid-15th century and developed Samsun.*

Along the peninsula, north of the town, are the country's only Norwegian-style fjords. The Hamsilos inlet cuts through green verges to create a serene network of fjords. Closer to town there are secluded coves and a small natural harbor where sailboats bobble about.

Sinop itself sits on lush hills that tumble down to yellow-sand beaches. The loveliest **beach** is in front of the Sinop Turist Otel, a 10 minute-drive from the town. This stretch is often deserted and lends itself to long, dreamy walks while the sea rushes in to create islets that threaten to cut you off. The fish markets and shops of Sinop can just be seen in the distance.

Visit the Genoese **castle** and walk beside the surviving sections of the city walls, which are as high as 40 m/130 feet in places. The old **prison** (Sakarya Caddesi), with its Byzantine decorations, is worth a look. Farther down Sakarya Caddesi is the broad courtyard of 13th-century Alâeddin Camii and medrese. To the north on Okullar Caddesi is a good **Archaeology Museum** (open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-noon, 1pm-5pm; entrance fee), which has been revamped.

At the bottom of Atatürk Caddesi is the **harbor**, packed with fishing boats and shops selling hand-made replicas. At the far end of the harbor, beyond the sailing club, is a lonely building that was used by Turkish forces as a watchtower to spot advancing Russians during World War I. The building is now a **library**. A pot-holed coast road leads east from town towards the former American military base. From here, the landscape is wild, with waterfalls shooting down the cliffs into the Black Sea. This is the place for a dramatic clifftop walk.

A 25-km/16-mile detour inland from Sinop brings you to the village of **Erfelek**, where you can tackle part of the dirt road by car or hike the full 14 km/nine miles to Erfelek Tatlica Şelalesi, a collection of 28 **waterfalls**.

DIOGENES THE CYNIC

According to legend, Diogenes the Cynic was born in Sinop in 413BC. Diogenes is famed for his irreverent exchange with Alexander the Great. Diogenes had shunned all pleasures in favor of the simple life. He lived in a barrel and even threw away his cup once he discovered how to drink from his hands. Alexander took pity after coming across him and asked if there was anything he wanted. Diogenes replied: "Yes, stand aside, you are blocking the sun." Scholars argue this encounter took place in Greece, but residents of Sinop claim it happened by a painted fountain still standing in a back street in the town.

GERZE

About 40 km/25 miles west of Sinop along a picturesque, but hazardously rocky, stretch of coast is Gerze, a haven for lovers of the sea. There is little to do except walk along the shingle beach or one of the three stone piers and have tea at a café. All along the harbor wall, fishermen exchange loud banter while preparing their jade-colored nets.

In the backstreets, rows of neat houses are painted garish shades of pink, orange and green. Gerze is as authentic a fishing town as you can find, which means there is a limited choice of places to stay, but some good fish restaurants.

The road continues east and leaves the coast at Bafra, a tobacco-growing town on the sweeping Kizilirmak delta. Beyond Bafra, the road becomes noticeably busier as it heads for the port city of Samsun.

INLAND TO KASTAMONU

To follow the inland route from Safranbolu, take Route 30 east 105 km/65 miles to Kastamonu, a smart Ottoman town wrapped around a lively bazaar district. Although some of the Ottoman houses have been restored and turned into pensions, Kastamonu still plays bridesmaid to Safranbolu. For its location alone, the town deserves to be better known.

In the center of town is **Seljuk Ismail Bey Camii**, known as the groundless mosque because it stands on a giant rock. Sharing this pivotal position are a caravansary and a *medrese* dating from 1460. The caravansary is now a restaurant with low-slung seating built into the arches that once served as stables. The *medrese* houses a craft market.

The town has a small **Archaeological Museum** (open Tuesday-Sunday 8am-5pm; entrance fee) with Roman artifacts found locally surrounded by a knot of half-timber houses in various states of repair.

The hills outside Kastamonu are engulfed in pine forests that hide quaint brick or wooden houses with logs piled up to their roofs ready to fire up a stove. The fields are filled with livestock and the area produces some of the creamiest butter, milk and cheese in the country. South of Kastamonu is **Ilgaz Milli Parki**, dominated by its 3,000-m/9,850-foot twin peaks.

To the north, the road cuts through forests to the almost silent hamlet of **Kasaba** with its scattering of farmhouses beside a trickling stream. A dirt track through the stream leads to **Mahmut Bey Camii** ✮, the most beautiful mosque in the whole of Turkey. The 14th-century mosque is a Seljuk masterpiece, a symphony of carvings from floor to ceiling. It is best to visit in the morning, as there is no electricity.

© Samantha Lafferty

Idyllic village of Kasaba

TIP: *If **Mehmet Bey Camii** is locked, ask for the key at the farmhouse opposite.*

THE ROAD TO AMASYA

Continuing along the inner Black Sea Region following Route 100 south from Kastamonu to Amasya, there is a series of one-road villages dominated by their green-painted mosques. The Yeşilirmak River (Green River) looks muddy brown as it meanders around mountains of fir trees. The mountains rise and fall for miles, with only a smattering of houses for company. Rolling hills eventually give way to verdant farmland and apple orchards around Amasya.

AMASYA ✮

Amasya is so perfectly hidden in a deep gorge that it looks as if it might have tumbled off the grey-brown rocks that surround it. Whitewashed, half-timber houses overhang Yeşilirmak River, one of the country's longest. The protruding upper floors of the Ottoman houses

© Christian Koehn

Ottoman houses and Pontic tomb

are reflected in the calm water. At night with their lights are switched on, they look like dolls' houses.

Above, the limestone crags of the Harsena Mountains jut out impossibly, almost spiking the houses. Your view will inevitably be drawn to the tombs of the Pontic Kings cut into the sheer rock face. A rock-cut staircase leads up the mountain to the tombs (open daily 8am-5pm in summer, closes 4pm in winter; entrance fee), which lie empty and are devoid of inscription. Beside them are the ruins of the **Pontic palace** and a **Turkish bath**, a later addition by the Ottomans. At night, the tombs are doused in a purple light, which adds to the drama of the scene.

Higher still are the dilapidated walls of the **citadel**. A scarily steep path continues up the mountain from the rock tombs, but it is better to follow Ziya Paşa Bulvari to the clock tower and take the road to the left that winds up to mountain's peak. A walk around the citadel is both precarious and prepossessing. In summer, shafts of sunlight cut across the mountains, giving them a purple hue. In winter, the peaks are covered in snow and fog cloaks the town. A lone cannon sits within the citadel walls. It is fired each year to mark the end of Ramadan.

Among the warrens of streets below the rock tombs is **Hazeranlar Konag**, a 19th-century Ottoman mansion with an **ethnography museum** (open 8am-11:45am, 1:15pm-4:45pm; closed Monday; entrance fee) depicting local culture. The downstairs section of the building houses a fine arts museum.

Strabo, the famous ancient Greek geographer, was born in Amasya and died there in about 23 AD. His work, Geography, documents Greek and Roman lands around the time of Christ's birth.

The Seljuks & Ottomans in Amasya

The Seljuks took Amasya in 1071 and held on until the onslaught of Genghis Khan's Mongol horsemen in the mid-13th century. A lunatic asylum dating from the early 1300s is all that remains of the short, destructive Mongol scourge. The Seljuks left a more lasting legacy. The best examples of Seljuk architecture are the 13th-century **Gok Medrese** and the **Burmali Minare Camii**, or Mosque of the Twisted Minaret, both south of Mustafa Kemal Paşa Caddesi.

© Samantha Lafferty

Amasya is dwarfed by the Harsena Mountains

Amasya became an Ottoman city in 1392 when Beyazit I rode in. Soon afterwards, sultans began sending their sons there to train as successors. This led to Amasya being known as the City of Princes. A promenade along the river has the busts of princes who ruled Amasya before they returned to the seat of power in Istanbul.

The grandest mosque in Amasya is **Sultan Beyazit Camii**, which is set amid gardens overlooking the river. Behind it is an **archaeological museum**, Amasya Muzesi (Atatürk Caddesi; open Tuesday-Sunday 8am-11:45am, 1:15pm-4:45pm; entrance fee) with Bronze Age tools, Roman jewelry and Ottoman manuscripts and weapons. The best part of the museum is a creepy annex, reached through a graveyard. It has a display of mummies in glass cases.

In the middle of the narrow shopping streets is a **Taş Han**, an 18th-century stone inn where men make copper barrels and tea urns. At the far end of town, over Künç Bridge, is an unusual eight-sided theological school, **Büyükaga Medrese**. It was founded by the Chief White Eunuch of Beyazit II.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

A *medrese* was a theological school that taught the Koran, languages, mathematics, medicine, music, sport and astronomy. They were generally charitable organizations and students were provided with free board and lodging. The first known *medrese* was built in Iraq.

TOKAT

Route 180 south from Amasya to Tokat passes the towns of Ezinepazari and Pazar, notable for their wonderful caravan inns. A detour farther back west from Pazar brings you to Zile, where Julius Caesar defeated an uprising by the Pontic Kings in a matter of hours and declared his famous line: *Veni, vidi, vici*, I came, I saw, I conquered.

Tokat is a pretty town known for its copperware and hand-painted textiles. The town has a hodgepodge of green and yellow half-timber houses spilling out from the main square, which is dominated by a grand clock tower. The main reason to visit Tokat is the 13th-century **Gok Medrese**, named for its turquoise tiles. Unfortunately, many of these were lost during repairs to the building in the 1970s. A walk through the town shows off more of its wonderful architecture, including inns, mosques and bazaars.

From Tokat, either continue southeast to the Seljuk city of Sivas (which belongs to Central Anatolia, but is easily reached on a two-hour drive from here) or head back north to the Black Sea Coast. Taking the northern route, it is worth a 70-km/43-mile detour to **Niksar**, once a capital of the Danismend Emirs. It has a well-preserved citadel and early Turkish monuments, including **Coregi Büyük Mosque** and its 12th-century carved stone portal.

© Samantha Lafferty

Stocking up for winter

THE ROUTES MEET AT SAMSUN

The busy port city of Samsun's most illustrious feature is that it is the point where Atatürk landed on May 19, 1919 and began devising his defense against the Greek army, which had invaded Izmir. The date is considered to be the start of the Turkish War of Independence and is a national holiday.

Samsun has at various times been ruled by Greeks, Romans and Seljuks, who afforded trading rights to the Genoese. When the Otto-

Opposite: Rock tombs for Pontic kings (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board) mans took the city and threw out the Genoese, they burned it to cinders, which is why travelers struggle to find anything of historical interest. As ports go, Samsun is particularly charmless and not worth a stop unless you are changing buses or catching a train to Cappadocia or Amasya.

Onward from Samsun, the scenery descends into disappointing sprawl. Once hailed as the more attractive stretch of the coast, dotted with secluded coves and fishing villages, the forever-clogged four-lane highway now whizzes so close to these harbors that a day on the beach would mean serious exposure to carbon monoxide. Along the roadside there is an abundance of factories and towns built entirely from concrete blocks. There are still some gems to be picked out, such as **Ünye** and **Perşembe**, but to really appreciate this stretch of the Black Sea you need to venture inland to the hills. At **Giresun**, the hazelnut capital of Turkey, is a featureless town surrounded by spectacular green plateaus. The ruined Byzantine **Church of Jason** stands on the Camburnu promontory east of Ünye. This is the place where Jason and his band of Argonauts are believed to have led their quest for the Golden Fleece.

> ***Turkey is the location of the first known beauty contest. Aphrodite, Hera and Athena were the contestants and Paris the judge. He chose Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, and she in turn promised Paris that Helen would be his. His love for Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, sparked the 10-year Trojan War.***

TRABZON

Trabzon's history is embroiled in the fabled tales of traveler Marco Polo and the English writer Rose Macaulay, who described the "luminous enchantment" of the city, a "green Eden at the foot of the Pontic Mountains," in her novel *The Towers of Trebizond*. Polo, on his expedition, found the Empire of Trebizond, the last stronghold of Byzantine wealth and splendor. In reality, modern-day Trabzon is a sprawling city with

Ortahisar district, Trabzon

an ugly harbor, bustling highway and high-rise flats. Despite that, it is strange how the busy streets grow on you.

Founded in 7000BC by Milanese colonists, the city reached its pinnacle under the rule of the Comneni Dynasty. Alexius Comnenus established the kingdom in Trabzon after the Byzantine court was exiled from Constantinople following the Crusader invasion in 1204. The city flourished because of trade along the Silk Road.

The Ottomans took control of Trabzon in the mid-15th century and used it as a strategic port to fight threats from Russia. And indeed, the city briefly fell to the Russians during the First World War. Russia and Georgia retain a big influence as trading partners and in making the city more cosmopolitan. The connection brought a problem with prostitutes moving across the Black Sea to ply their trade. This liberalism was met with furious gusto by Turkish women, who banished many of them.

SIGHTSEEING

Trabzon is an easy city to navigate around on foot. The main sites are within a short walking distance or taxi ride from **Park Meydani**, the main square.

Aya Sofya

The first stop ought to be the serene **Aya Sofya Museum** (Aya Sofya Mahallesi, ☎ 0462-2233043; open 8:30am-noon, 1pm-5:30pm, closed Monday; entrance fee), a church built by Armenians for the Comnenos in the mid-13th century. It became a mosque when Mehmet the Conqueror captured the city. He ordered its frescoes, which covered the walls and domed ceilings, to be plastered over. They have now been painstakingly uncovered to reveal scenes of the Last Supper, Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden, and the Marriage at Cana. The church is set in a peaceful garden, which also has a tall bell tower.

© Samantha Lafferty

Walk down to Zeytinlik Sokak, off Cumhuriyet Caddesi, to **Trabzon Museum** (open Tuesday-Sunday 8:15am-noon, 1pm-4:45pm; entrance fee), a former banker's mansion that accommodated Russian forces in the First World War. Atatürk stayed here in 1924 during his first tour of the new Republic of Turkey. The mansion was designed by an Italian and has Baroque ceilings.

Atatürk Kösku

Atatürk Kösku

The city's most striking building is Atatürk Kösku (open everyday 8:30am-4:30am; entrance fee), a three-storey whitewashed house with enormous chandeliers and wide balconies overlooking the sea. Atatürk was so taken with the house that the city donated it to him. He spent just three days here before his death.

Despite that fact, the house is brimming with Atatürk's former possessions, including hunting rifles and a gramophone. Strangely, there is a billiard table in the entrance hall because it is the only one of the crescent-shaped rooms that it would fit in. Atatürk pledged the house to the nation – along with his other properties – when he died saying, "One's wealth must be his or her spiritual personality."

Climb the steep road from Taksim Caddesi to **Boztepe Park** for sweeping views of the port and the bizarre, and an equally tatty, Hollywood-style Trabzon sign on the side of the hill. On the western slope of the park is the **Irene Tower**, built by Empress Irene in 1340.

Below the park is the 14th-century **Girls' Monastery** (open everyday 10am-6pm; entrance fee) with its austere fasting rooms and rock church. The monastery was abandoned in the early 20th-century and the frescoes are badly damaged. You need to visit in the morning because there is no electricity. Trabzon is a trading city and there is good shopping on the streets running from Park Meydani to the Bedesten, a covered market that has been badly refitted with pine replacing the original beams.

Sumela Monastery ★★★

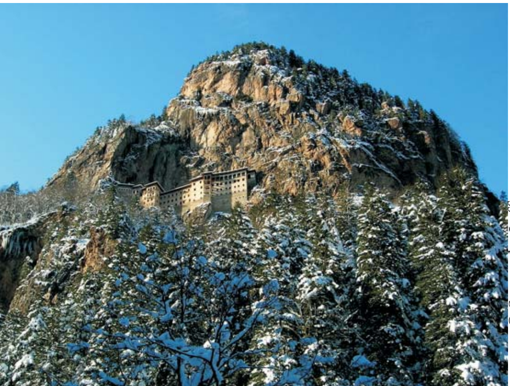
Remote and mist-shrouded **Altindere Milli Parki** adds to the gothic setting for Sumela Monastery, suspended on a sheer cliff above a heavily wooded, plunging gorge. Standing 1,200 m/3,900 feet above sea level, the monastery has to be one of the world's greatest building achievements.

Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The monks' caves and church inside the monastery are reached by a steep 250-m/820-foot walk up the mountain along a tapered path, following the line of a river for part of the way. It takes about 40 minutes to make the climb. The path can be muddy at any time of year and cut off by snow in winter. It is best tackled in decent running shoes or walking boots.

The Greek Orthodox monastery was founded in the fourth century by two monks, Barnabas and Sophranias, who dreamt about a sacred cave. They sought out the cliff face and built a simple church around the famous icon of the Virgin Mary painted by St. Luke. Given its location, it is difficult to imagine how they ever found the cliff, let alone set about organizing the church's construction. In the 11th century, the church was expanded into a monastery with 72 cells. Sumela was abandoned in 1923 when the Republic was created. A monk returned to the monastery eight years later to remove the icon of the Virgin Mary, which is believed to have been responsible for many miracles.

Getting to the monastery in snow can be treacherous



© Samantha Lafferty

The top of the path leads to the tiny monks' cells and rock church. Once heavily damaged by graffiti, the interior and its frescoes have been revived. Sadly, the restoration of the façade is so extensive that it almost looks new. To reach Sumela (open daily; entrance fee), follow the winding road from Trabzon towards Gümüşhane and take the road that branches left beyond Maçka to the monastery (46 km/29 miles).

THE CARAVAN ROUTE TO BAYBURT

From Sumela, there are two possible onward routes. The first continues south along the Persian caravan route known as the Zigana Pass to Gümüşhane (88 km/55 miles). Taking this path, you can visit the less-known **Peristera Monastery** perched atop a cliff near Kustul village. The monastery is difficult to reach by car, so it is best to hire a guide and trek to it.

The drive to **Gümüşhane** is more interesting than the town itself, which was largely destroyed by the Russians during the First World War. About 80 km/50 miles farther along E-97 is **Bayburt**, encircled by its Byzantine fortress walls. Little remains inside the castle. A river runs along the base of the hill almost acting as a moat. There is an interesting string of houses built on stilts along its banks. Bayburt is chiefly known for having been host to Marco Polo during his journey to China.

South of Bayburt, the highway turns into the E-80 and runs southwest to Erzincan and southeast to Erzurum. Instead, take a back road north out of Bayburt and follow the road that veers right to the lake at Uzungöl. Alternatively, stick to the coastal highway and head east past a succession of industrial towns to **Of**, where there is a turnoff to Uzungöl known as the Soğanli Pass. The road to the lake runs alongside a carpet of steep tea terraces. Women with both huge wicker baskets and small children strapped to their backs endure the grueling labor of hours spent bent double picking tea. In summer, frequent bus service runs the 45-km/28-mile trip from Of to the lake.

Uzungöl, the Long Lake ✯

It is not difficult to see why so many Turks are lured to Uzungöl (99 km/62 miles from Trabzon). Known as the Long Lake, Uzungöl is somewhat remote and totally enclosed by mountains. Standing by the water there is nothing to see but ridge piled upon ridge, all endlessly green. The landscape, and sleepy village of wooden chalets around it, look more Swiss than Turkish. The only giveaway is the mosque that sits at the far end of the lake.

© Samantha Lafferty

Uzungöl Lake

Uzungöl is enthralling in winter when everything is under snow and the lake is frozen. The lake is fed by a series of rushing streams that flow off the mountains as the snow melts. In summer, take one of the minibuses up to **Demirkapi plateau**, an ensemble of wildflowers and seven glacier lakes. Icy cold **Aygir Gölü** is the most beautiful of the lakes. The Kaçkar Daglari (Kaçkar Mountains) are just opening up to tourism, with travelers coming to trek in the plateaus and raft on Çoruh River.

THE CAUCASIAN LAZ

This region of the Black Sea is home to the Caucasian Laz population. Cousins of the Georgians, Laz people are staunchly independent and yet, at the same time, loyal to the Turkish government. Unlike their Christian Armenian and Georgian neighbors, the Laz converted en masse to Islam and so were trusted and protected by the Ottomans. The region's Armenian population fled during the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence.

The Laz population tends to be fair skinned with brown or even red hair. They have their own language. The local saying, "A Laz talks with a pistol," should be noted but not feared. Laz people are extremely friendly unless pushed. To the see real spirit of the region, visit in June when the colorful plateau festival is in full swing. Watch the Horon dance being performed by hundreds of people to the beat of drums and bagpipes.

EAST TO THE GEORGIAN BORDER

Back on the coast, **Rize** is the tea capital of Turkey. Tea plantations stretch for miles and the sight of them is broken only by the chimneys of factories built to process clipped leaves.

GUESS WHAT? Tea was first planted in Turkey in the 1930s and, as the price of coffee rose, it was adopted as the national drink.

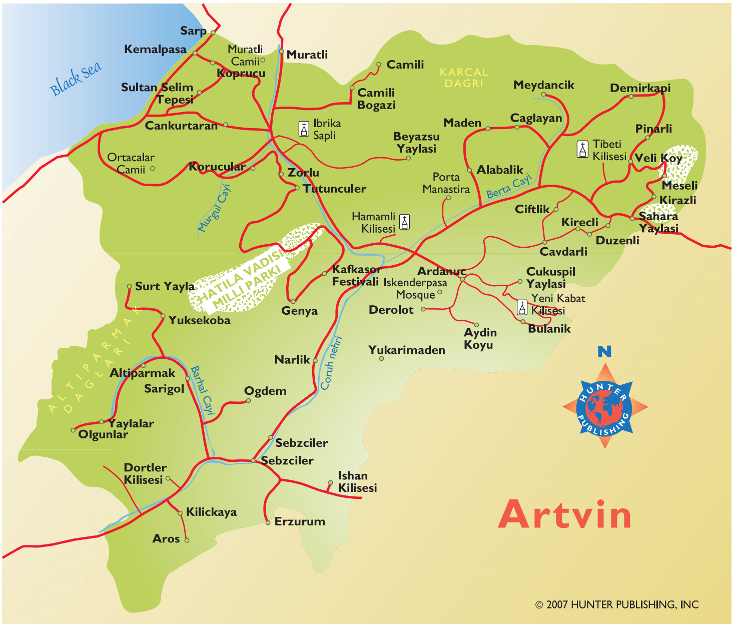
Crater lake, Kackar Mountains (© Yahya Kesimal)

After Pazar, swing off the coast road again to **Çamlihemşin**, a village of wooden houses on the edge of Firtina Vadisi (Valley of Storms) with its rushing streams crossed by stone-arched bridges. Make a trip to nearby **Zilkale**, a moss-ravaged castle at a crossroad of ridges. Beyond Çamlihemşin is **Ayder**, another beautiful plateau village with a couple of narrow waterfalls on its fringes. Ayder is the best place to stay if you want to trek in the Kaçkar Mountains.

LEAVING THE COAST

Skirting the coast again, the highway passes a string of concrete towns on its way to the Georgian border. Black sand beaches lead to the frontier town of **Hopa**, a lively impasse for truckers, but of little interest to travelers unless you enjoy hanging around pool halls. Do not try to cross the border, as you will not get very far. Instead, turn back inland where an asphalt road winds through seemingly endless hills and the Black Sea is left behind. For travelers making the journey from the Black Sea region into the wilderness of Eastern Turkey, this is the last sight of Turkey's coast until you hit the Mediterranean Sea at Hatay.

In the middle of the mountains, you stumble upon an enormous dam project. Although it is not on the scale of the GAP Project farther


Black Sea
Sarp
Kemalpasa
Muratli Camii
Muratli
Kopruçu
Sultan Selim Tepesi
Camili
KARCAL DAGRI
Meydancik
Demirkapi
Camili Bogazi
Cankurtaran
Ibrika Sapli
Maden
Caglayan
Pinarli
Beyazsu Yaylasi
Tibeti Kilisesi
Veli Koy
Ortacalar Camii
Korucular
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Berta Cayi
Kirazli
Murgul Cayi
Hamamli Kilisesi
Ciftlik
Sahara Yaylasi
Kirecli
Duzenli
Cavdarli
HATILA VADISI MILLI PARKI
Kafkasor Festivali
Ardanuc
Iskenderpasa Mosque
Cukuspil Yaylasi
Surt Yayla
Yeni Kabat Kilisesi
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Sarigol
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Ishan Kilisesi
Kilickaya
Erzurum
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Artvin
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south, the giant towers built to support a new road bridge cutting across the dam are a magnificent sight. At the time of writing, a rough mud and pebble road was diverted across a shallow stretch of Çoruh River, making for a slow and bumpy journey. The river along this route is muddy and brown, discolored from a nearby copper factory and mud slides during the rainy season. At the end of the temporary road the journey speeds up into Artvin, where the landscape changes to barren, rugged mountains.

Artvin is stacked high up a steep hill in a scenic location between two peaks. The ramparts of a fortress wind up the mountainside. Aside from its location, the town's biggest draw is an annual **bull fighting festival**. There is basic accommodation and the opportunity to stock up on groceries before heading into the mountains. North of Artvin along Route 950 is the village of **Borcka** and, beyond it, a road swings right to **Karagöl**, a remote Alpine lake engulfed by forests.

GEORGIAN CHURCHES

On leaving Artvin, follow Çoruh River south along Route 950. The sand-colored mountains are strewn with wooden shacks that look as if they would wash away with heavy rain. There are more tea terraces and clutches of beehives painted eggshell blue. Farther along the road, mountains descend into a steep canyon and the Çoruh's rapids become more furious. Precarious wooden bridges with rough wire handrails are randomly slung across the river to connect hillside houses with the road. As you get lost in the scenery, look out for sheep and goats straying into the road.

Around the villages of Yusufeli, Işhan and Barhal are remote Georgian churches and graceful Armenian bridges. The roads to many of the churches are poor dirt tracks that require some hiking. The easiest way to see a selection of them is to make a loop from Barhal to Oltu. Sober-looking **Barhal Church** owes its preservation to being used as a mosque. Head south from Barhal to Yusufeli for the **Dörtkilise**. The name means four churches, however, only one remains. It is an almost identical church to Barhal, but enjoys a more romantic setting, protruding from the flower-speckled hillside. The complex was built in the ninth-century as a monastery for nuns. To the east is the church at **Işhan**. The red-domed basilica, in the grounds of a schoolhouse, is ringed by greenery and framed by russet mountains.

South along Route 950 is the enormous **Oskvank monastery** complex dating from the 10th century. It has also been used as a mosque and is in good condition, save for a partially crumbling dome. The same road leads to the parched **Tortum Gorge** and nearby **Tortum waterfalls**, which crash into the 10 km/six mile-long lake. At the southern end of the lake a trail leads to **Haho Kilise**, once an important Georgian church and now a mosque. From Tortum, Route 950 heads south to the Eastern Anatolian city of Erzurum, while Route 955 goes north towards Kars.

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON WHEELS

CYCLING TOURS

It is possible to cycle the length of the untamed Black Sea Coast from Şile to Hopa, but it is a massive 1,200 km/750 miles and parts of the coast are overdeveloped and not worth the leg strain. More digestible and scenic rides include **Istanbul** (where you should plan to hire a bike, see page 136) to **Şile-Ağva**. If your bike has good front suspension, you can cycle the pot-holed, hairpin coast road between **Amasra and Sinop**, a 310-km/190-mile ride that takes about five days at a steady pace. The coastal towns of Cide, Inebolu and Ayancik are the best places to stay along the route.

Inland, the landscape and pretty villages on a minor road between **Safranbolu and Kastamonu** warrant a trip. From the Çarşi district in Safranbolu, take the road towards Bartin and turn off to the village of Eflani. Follow the minor road to Daday and Kasaba to see Mahmut Bey Camii before finishing in Kastamonu (about 200 km/125 miles). There is the incentive of knowing you can rest your weary legs in a grand Ottoman mansion at either end of the route. From Kastamonu, you can head south for an extra day of riding in the forests of the Ilgaz Milli Parki.

Another good inland ride takes a back road between the towns of **Amasya and Tokat**, via Zile. The road zigzags across Yeşilirmak Çayi and runs past Mahberi Hatun Caravansary in the village of Pazar.

Among the best places to ride in the region are the hills in the east. While trekking is becoming popular in this region, it is still difficult to find guided bike tours even though there are plenty of trails through forests and mountains between **Kaçkar Daglari Milli Parki** around Yusufeli and **Hatila Vadisi Milli Parki** around Artvin. There are some well-laid trails in these hills. One trail starts at Artvin and descends the mountain, following the walls of the castle, before crossing Hatila Vadisi Milli Parki and heading north along the banks of the fast-flow-

© Yaya Kesimal

Trekking in the Kaçkar Mountains

ing Çoruh Nehri river to the town of Borcka. Head east over Murgul Çayi (stream) to the village of Ortacalar, which has a beautiful bridge on its outskirts. A narrow mule trail climbs the mountain here to the Sirt Yayla (plateau). The trail widens again as it crosses another mountain range and descends to Barhal Çayi and continues to Yusufeli.

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

TREKKING

Safranbolu: The forests around Safranbolu hide several canyons and caves for trekking. One of the more interesting routes heads north out of Safranbolu in the direction of Tokalti. After an easy three-km/1.9-mile hike you will reach a limestone canyon running alongside Hizar River. You can follow the canyon for another four km/2.5 miles underneath a stone bridge to **Incekaya Aqueduct**, a restored aqueduct built to channel water into town. You can camp for free around the aqueduct in summer.

Leaving the canyon, head through a forest and vineyards to **Bulak Mağarasi**, the fourth-largest cave in the country. It has four levels with a stream flowing through into small pools. This has created some wonderful stalagmites and stalactites. Because of the water, it is not safe to visit the cave when there has been heavy rainfall.

Alternately, hike 11 km/seven miles to the village of **Yoruk**, an open-air museum of Turkish-Turkmen culture. It is packed with historic houses and is effectively a mini-Safranbolu, although fewer tourists know about it. Just north of the village is **Düzce Canyon**, the longest in the area.

Kakçar Mountains: The Kakçar Daglari rise between the shores of the Black Sea to the north and Çoruh Valley to the south. The range has rolling hills that become more rugged nearer the coast. The lower reaches of the mountains are covered with tea plantations and citrus orchards. These give way to dense forests of chestnut, pine and beech trees. Beyond the forests are plateaus covered with alpine meadows in the summer. The hills are studded with waterfalls and glacier lakes. Even in spring, patches of snow cover the bald mountains.

The cooler Black Sea summers means it is possible to trek for at least nine months of the year. Trekkers should be prepared for unpredictable weather and shifting mists, which can descend quickly. The area sees heavy snowfall in winter and there is a risk of avalanches, making it risky to climb or trek. The easiest way to reach the Kaçkar Mountains by car is from Pazar, turning inland to Ayder via Camhilemsin. Buses take about three hours from Trabzon to Ayder. The bus between Trabzon and Yusufeli takes almost six hours with a change at Artvin. To get the most of the mountains, plan to camp for at least a couple of nights. Bring camping gear with you, as well as waterproofs to beat the unpredictable weather.

> ***The mountains are brimming with wildlife, including bears, wild goats, wolves, foxes and boars. Giant black bulls spend summers grazing in the pastures. Because the area is rich in food, these animals are not considered particularly dangerous.***

The range is divided into three sections: **Vercenik** (3,710 m/ 12,170 feet), **Kavron** (3,932 m/12,900 feet), and **Altiparmak** (3,480 m/ 11,400 feet). To reach Kavron, take a bus or drive to Olgunlar, where you can hire a guide and mule to carry equipment. There is a small campsite here, but the main site is at Dilber Düzü, a five-hour hike away. It takes about 10 hours to reach the summit and then descend to the plateau at Kavron, where there is another campsite.

For a longer trek, start at **Ayder** and walk through **Caymakcur Valley** to a campsite near Büyükdeniz Gölü (lake). On the second day, cross the range to another campsite at Dobe Düzü. Then trek across a high ridge via Olgunlar to the campsite at Dilber Düzü. On the final day, make the climb to the summit. This ascent is along a good path until the final stretch, where there are loose stones.

Vercenik, the second-highest and most remote mountain in the range, can be reached via **Çat**. The mountain is more challenging to climb than Kavron, but trekkers are rewarded with the sight of serene glacier lakes hemmed in by wild crags.

© Middle Earth Travel

Following mule trails

Guided Tours

Yahya Kesimal, from Şiş Hotel in Ayder, works for the Ministry of the Environment in Ankara. He grew up around the mountains and plateaus of the eastern Black Sea region and knows every inch of them.

He returns to the region each summer and can be hired as a guide (☎ 0533-2614082, yahyakesimal@yahoo.co.uk).

Anatolian Adventures (☎ 0216-4185222, www.anatolianadventures.com) is a professional tour company running six-day Trans Kaçkar treks.

Middle Earth Travel (☎ 0384-2712559, www.middleearthtravel.com) has two regular guided treks through the Kaçkar Daglari. The emphasis is on finding more remote routes.

Istanbul-based **Bukla** (☎ 0212-2450635, www.bukla.com) has a good reputation for running small group treks around Turkey.

Breakaway Adventures (US ☎ 800-567-6286, www.breakaway-adventures.com) has a 16-day combination trekking tour of Kaçkar Daglari and Mount Ararat.

ADVENTURES ON WATER

RAFTING

The **Çoruh Nehri** river in the eastern Black Sea springs from the Mescit Daglari and flows through mountains and orchards, passing ancient churches and bridges before it hits the Black Sea at Batumi in Georgia. The river is considered one of the world's 10 best for rafting and has hosted the Rafting World Championships. Rapids along the 260-km/160-mile stretch from Bayburt to Artvin run Class III through V and are not for the feint hearted.

© Bougainville

Riding the rapids

The course starts at Bayburt with gentle Class II-III rapids for the first 100 km/62 miles. The speed picks up with some Class IV and V rapids along the middle section of the course from Ispir to Tekkale. You can camp at Tekkale and climb into the hills to visit Dort Kilise, a Medieval Georgian church. As the route enters the final 83 km/52 miles, Barhal and Oltu rivers join the Çoruh Nehri just around Yusufeli. This is the most challenging section. The river hits a stretch nicknamed King Kong. Best left to professionals, the foaming water here flies over boulders at a ferocious pace with rapids rising to Class V and higher when the river is at its highest. After this section, the river enters a narrow canyon and the rapids come at a calmer pace until the end of the route just outside Artvin. There is a separate rafting course on Barhal Çayi, one of the tributaries of Çoruh Nehri.

Alternatif Outdoor (☎ 0252-4172720, www.alternatifoutdoor.com) has been leading rafting trips on the Çoruh since 1992. They run four- and five-day excursions between May and June.

Nature by Water (US ☎ 866-424-8433, www.water bynature.com) is a serious watersports company that leads rafting and kayaking trips around the world. It has an unblemished safety record. The company has week-long rafting expeditions along the Çoruh.

CULTURAL ADVENTURES

FESTIVALS

The streets of **Safranbolu** around Cinci Han Hotel in the Çarşi district host the **Altin Safran Film Festival** each September. There are screenings of Turkish films, alongside musical concerts, folklore exhibitions and traditional food. Details can be found at the Tourist Information Office in the center of town.

SHOPPING

Travelers to the Black Sea Coast can pick up some interesting souvenirs. **Safranbolu** is known for producing the best Turkish Delight in the country and almost every store in the bazaar district sells a variety of the sweet. You can also buy fabrics and miniature replicas of the town's half-timber framed houses.

© Makalp

Market street, Safranbolu

Stores in the harbor town of **Sinop** are stuffed full of handmade wooden fishing boats. You watch them being made at **Galeri Ulgen** (Tersane Çarşisi 12, ☎ 0368-2611653) and **Akmanoglu** (Kurtuluş Caddesi, ☎ 0368-2605636).

In **Trabzon**, the Bedesten is the oldest commercial building in the city. It has undergone a bad restoration job but is worth a look for the jewelry and handicraft stalls.

WHERE TO STAY

Costs given are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

HOTEL PRICES	
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

AMASRA

Isikaltin Otel, on the small beach in Amasra, no phone. Rooms at this modern hotel are small but many have balconies overlooking the beach. There is a 24-hour fish restaurant and wonderful views from the roof terrace. $$

Turkili Hotel, Kum Mahallesi, Ozdemirhan Sokak 6, ☎ 0378-3153750, www.turkili.com.tr. Do not be fooled by the flamingo-pink exterior of this 40-room hotel near the harbor. The inside is contemporary and the rooms are business standard, owing to the fact it probably attracts more traveling salesmen than tourists. $$

AMASYA

AUTHOR PICK: Emin Efendi Konaklari, Hatuniye Mahallesi, Hazeranlar Sokak 85, ☎ 0358-2122552. This 200-year-old pension overlooks Yeşilirmak River. One of the large rooms has its own bathroom; the other four rooms share two bathrooms. All rooms are decorated with painted ceilings and voluminous colored drapes and bed linens. This is Ottoman with a dose of oomph. $$

© Harsena Otel

Harsena Otel, PTT Karsisi Yaliboyu Evleri, ☎ 0358-2183979, www.harsenaotel.com, is a grand 28-room mansion house set below the Pontic King Tombs. There is a restaurant and bar with live music and a garden for eating outdoors in the summer. $$

AUTHOR PICK: Melis Hotel, Yeniyol Caddesi 135, ☎ 0358-2122650, www.melishotel.net. A lovely five-storey hotel, the Melis is packed with the owner's personal treasures. Twelve spacious rooms are decked out with antique chairs and beds alongside air conditioning and satellite TV. The team at Melis is extremely friendly and welcoming. $$

Sukru Efendi Konaği, Hatuniye Mahallesi Hazeranlar Sokak 55, ☎ 0358-2126285, is a charming pension set on the river. Each of the six rooms has a bathroom, TV and mini-bar. $

AYDER

AUTHOR PICK: Şiş Otel, ☎ 0464-6572086, yahyakesimal@yahoo.co.uk. This chalet-style hotel is the perfect base for trekking in the Kaçkar Mountains. The owner's son, Yahya Kesimal, leads treks whenever he can escape his desk job in Ankara. The 37 rooms are comfortable and there is excellent home cooking in the restaurant. Above all, the service is great. $

KASTAMONU

Osmanli Sarayi Otel and Restaurant, Belediye Caddesi 81, ☎ 0366-2148408, commands one half of the town's main square. The entrance lobby in this 18-room palace is suitably imposing and the rooms are pretty, with oversized beds and luxurious bathrooms. $$$

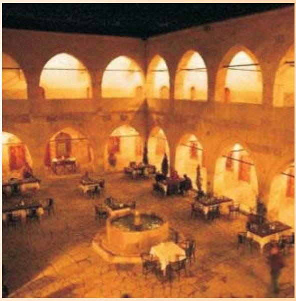
AUTHOR PICK: Toprakçilar Konaklari, Ismailbey Mahallesi, Alemdar Sokak 2, ☎ 0366-2121812, www.toprakcilar.com. This restored mansion sits on one of the lanes behind the bazaar. The owner, Gülsen, is an art historian who also owns a travel agency in Istanbul. Her house combines Ottoman art and traditional charm with boutique hotel excellence. A cozy restaurant serves home-cooked local dishes. $$$

© Toprakçilar Konaklari

SAFRANBOLU

Safranbolu has an abundance of hotels and pensions. A full list is available from the very good tourist information office in Çarşi. Visitors will probably find it best to be based in Çarşi and take mini-buses to Kiranköy and Bağlar.

AUTHOR PICK: Cinci Han Otel, Eski Çarşi, ☎ 0370-7120680, www.cincihan.com, was once a caravansary on the Silk Road. The 17th-century building has been beautifully converted into a luxury hotel. The standard rooms around the courtyard, which is now used as a restaurant, are traditionally compact and have bathrooms downstairs where ancient salesmen kept their wares. An enormous suite room features an original harem kitchen and *hamam*. $$



© Cinci Han Otel

AUTHOR PICK: Paşa Konaği, Çeşme Mahallesi, Kalealti Sokak 1-17, ☎ 0370-7128153, www.safranboluturizm.com.tr. The large rooms in this grand 18th-century Ottoman house have the original carved wooden ceilings and fireplaces and the bathrooms are hidden inside wooden cupboards. Rooms are opened with enormous iron keys. The house is surrounded by a rambling garden brimming with fig and plum trees. The hotel shows off some beautiful antiques and yet manages to feel very much like a home. $$

© Pasa Konagi

Selvili Koşk, Çeşme Mahallesi, Mescit Sokak 23, ☎ 0370-7128646. The half-timber façade of this Ottoman house opens into a rustic guesthouse of 26 rooms. The house has many original features and it gives budget travelers the chance to live like a vizier at least for one night. $

AUTHOR PICK: Turing Otel, Haci Halil Mahallesi, Celik Gulersoy Caddesi 18, ☎ 0370-7252883. This famous *konak* (house) on the edge of the Casri quarter is among the most palatial of the city's mansions. It actually consists of four houses joined by a tree-filled garden. Inside, the rooms are as lavish as its history. The main house, Havuzlu Konak, has its original marble bath and fountain where gentlemen would once have reclined on silk chairs to listen to music. $$

SINOP

Hotel Ermis, Iskele Caddesi 50, Gerze, ☎ 0368-7181540. The family-run Ermis hotel is slightly dated, although it is the best option if you plan to stay in Gerze. Most rooms have balconies where you can sit and watch the fishermen at work. There is live music in the restaurant. $

Sinop Turist Otel, Korucuk Koyu, Denizler Mevkii, ☎ 0368-2604945. Rooms at this beachside hotel are basic and there is a profusion of garish paint throughout. However, it is worth staying here for the stretch of sand, which you may have all to yourself. $

AUTHOR PICK: Villa Rose, Ada Mahallesi Kartal 9, ☎ 0368-2611923. This lovely old house is run by a former model who married an American military man stationed in the town. The six-room guesthouse is lavishly decorated and full of interesting antiques. The atmosphere is like home and so is the cooking. $$

Zinos Country Hotel, Enver Bahadir Yolu 75, ☎ 0368-2605600, www.zinoshotel.com. The black-and-white timber house does its best to achieve country club-style. Although uniformly designed, the 14 rooms have some lovely Ottoman features and views of the sea. The restaurant dishes up some of the best food in the town. $$

© Zinos Country Hotel

TRABZON

The austere grey glass exterior of **Büyük Sumela Hotel**, Maçka, ☎ 0462-5123540, www.sumelaotel.com, looks more like a drab office building than a hotel. The hotel's 115 rooms are well equipped and there is a gym, sauna and pool. Close to Sumela Monastery. $$$

AUTHOR PICK: Cosandere, Maçka, ☎ 0462-5311190, www.cosandere.com. This wooden lodge has rustic rooms and a snug dining room with a huge open fire. It is a great place to stay if you plan to visit Sumela Monastery and head into the hills afterwards. The owners run Jeep safari trips into the surrounding woodland. This is an extremely friendly place to stay, but note the strict no alcohol policy. You may also want to bring your own transport. $

The four-star **Usta Park Hotel**, Telgrafhane Sokak 3, ☎ 0462-3265700, www.ustaparkhotel.com, in the center of town has been totally renovated to a good standard with marble bathrooms and courtesy toiletries. There is a sauna and fitness center. $$$

© Zorlu Grand Hotel

Zorlu Grand Hotel, Maras Caddesi 9, ☎ 0462-3268400, www.zorlugrand.com. An enormous glass-domed ceiling and illuminated pool and fountain in the courtyard are the first clues to the grandeur of this hotel, located in the town center. Rooms are elegant and there is a colonnaded swimming pool and marble *hamam*. $$$$

UZUNGÖL

© Ensar Hotel

Ensar Motel and Restaurant, Fatih Caddesi 18, ☎ 0462-6566321, www.ensarmotel.com, consists of a clutch of Swiss-style chalets set around a lodge just behind the lake. $$

Inan Kardesler, ☎ 0462-6566297, www.inankardesler.com.tr, has log cabins and standard rooms in a large wooden lodge close to the lake. The interior of the house has some quirky touches, including a succession of giant chiseled animals along its hallways. Some of the rooms have Jacuzzi baths. The hotel organizes trekking tours. $$

© Inan Kardesler

WHERE TO EAT

AMASRA

Donus Restaurant, Büyükliman Caddesi, Turgut Isik Caddesi 4, ☎ 0378-3151011. Amasra's fish eateries have enough of a reputation to bring day-trippers all the way from Istanbul. This cozy fish restaurant is right in the middle of the town's big beach. Good views and good food. $$

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

AMASYA

Ali Kaya Restaurant, Cakallar Mevkii, ☎ 0358-2181505. Head to Ali Kaya for the most spectacular nighttime views of Amasya. If you can draw yourself away from the terrace, try the kebabs or chicken sauté cooked in earthenware pots. $$$

Belediye Parki, Merkez Belediye Parki Adli Binasi Yani, ☎ 0358-2185837. This outdoor café beside the Yeşilirmak River dishes up *gözlemesi*, deep-fried pancakes. $

Cesni Fast Food, Ziya Paşa Bulvari, Hazeranlar Konaği Karsisi, ☎ 0358-2126363, serves pizzas and hamburgers in a restaurant that would befit a more upscale bistro. It overlooks the citadel and river. $

Demiroğlu Pastanesi, Danismend Caddesi, Eski Ekin Pazari 8, ☎ 0358-2129228. I love the baklava from this shop tucked away on a street between the river and the main town. The owner is very friendly, even though he speaks little English. $

Emin Efendi Konaklari, Hatuniye Mahallesi Hazeranlar Sokak 73, ☎ 0358-2120852, www.eminefendi.com, is set in a 200-year-old Ottoman house overhanging the Yeşilirmak River. It serves steaks and local dishes in a dining room that would suit a doll's house. $$

© Emin Efendi Konaklari

> **MONEY SAVING TIP:** *Eat at the* lokantas *near the mosque. They have the best view of the illuminated tombs and the castle at a fraction of the cost of those on the opposite side of the river.*

Tadim Doner, Dere Kocacik Mahallesi, F. Sagiroğlu Sokak 5, ☎ 0358-2183161, is a relaxed restaurant serving authentic local food and great kebabs at rock-bottom prices. It is a popular hangout among locals. $

KASTAMONU

Baloğlu Pastanesi, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, ☎ 0366-2123573, serves delicious cakes and savory pastries. Try the syrup-drenched baklava. $

Canoğlu Pastanesi, Pievne Caddesi 44/1, ☎ 0366-2129090, has cheese and olive bread, chocolate pastries and toasted sandwiches in abundance. $

Hosgor Pide Salonu, Pievne Caddesi 54, ☎ 0366-2122347. You can pick up a variety of tasty meat and cheese *pide* (Turkish pizza). Take-out service available. $

RIZE

Bekiroğlu Pide - Kebap Salonu, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 161, ☎ 0464-2171380, has an endless selection of kebabs and *pide*. It is all fresh and well spiced. Don't expect any low-calorie options. $$

SAFRANBOLU

Asiyan Koy Sofrasi, Arasta Arkasi 7, Çarşi, ☎ 0370-7124170. If you are hankering after Asian food then try this place. The owners are Turkish, but their attempt at authentic Asian food is decent. $$

Develik Restaurant, Cinci Han Hotel, Eski Çarşi, ☎ 0370-7120680, www.cincihan.com. The courtyard of this former caravan inn now serves as a restaurant during the summer; in cooler weather, diners eat in the former stables. You can pick out the iron hooks on the walls where the animals were once tethered for the night. The quality of the food has definitely improved since those days. Everything is traditional and there is a big Black Sea influence. $$$

Safranbolu Sofrasi, Hidirlik Yokusu 28/A, ☎ 0370-7121451. The ground floor of this Ottoman house has a small café where the owner's wife, Zeynep, makes Turkish pancakes in front of her customers. There is also a range of Black Sea dishes. $

SINOP

Grand Café, Gelincik Mahallesi, Fatih Caddesi 102, ☎ 0368-2618496, may not be grand, but it serves good quality breakfast, soups and kebabs. $

Hamam Café & Bar, Camikebir Mahallesi, Alaatin Keykubat Caddesi 3, ☎ 0368-2612610. A simple café serving coffee and toasted sandwiches in a historic Turkish bath, which means the place is always guaranteed to be warm. $

Saray Restaurant, Iskele Caddesi, Rihtim Sokak 18 , ☎ 0368-2611729. If you like your fish straight from the sea, then Saray in the harbor is the place to eat. The fish is on the plate almost before it has stopped wriggling. $$

Sen Pastaneleri, Kibris Caddesi 28, ☎ 0368-2611711, serves oodles of traditional Turkish desserts and pastries. $

Sky, Gazi Caddesi 6, ☎ 0368-2604344, is a classy fish eatery next to the town's sailing club. It has a contemporary décor, live music and wonderful views of the sea. $$

TRABZON

The three-storey **Evim Ev**, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 13/B, ☎ 0462-3212155, serves the best kebabs in Trabzon. $$

Bordo Mavi Restaurant, Kemerkaya Mahallesi, Trabzonspor Sadri Sener Sosyal Tesisleri, ☎ 0462-3233325, is easier to find than the address would suggest – just ask for the Trabzonspor Muzesi. The contemporary Italian restaurant is part of the Trabzonspor soccer museum and is set in a leafy garden. You never know, you might be rubbing shoulders with a soccer player. Open for lunch. $$$

The East

The eastern fringes of Anatolia are often defined as having a wild landscape and a turbulent history. Although true, that description ignores the region's enormously varied architecture and its melting pot of religions and cultures.

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Inhospitable winters and Kurdish uprisings have seriously dented the region's attempts to build a tourist industry, even though it has some of the country's most fascinating sights. The area is poor and underdeveloped, making travel difficult without a car. On the upside, that means intrepid travelers can be greedy and explore many of the ruins entirely on their own.

There are two distinct regions here. **Eastern Anatolia** stretches from **Erzincan**, a city of fine Islamic shrines, to **Kars**, a former Russian outpost with the distinction of being the coldest place in the country, and down to the impoverished town of **Hakkari** on the Iraqi border. Travelers who endure the huge tracts of empty countryside are rewarded with architecture such as the Işak Paşa Sarayi, an evocative 17th-century palace high on a rocky plateau, and the ghostly Armenian ruins of Ani. The most visited site in the region is **Nemrut Daği**, an implausible shrine to King Antiochus of Commagene built 2,150 m/7,000 feet up a mountain.

The region encompasses the country's tallest mountain, **Mount Ararat**, said to be the resting place of Noah's Ark, and **Lake Van**, its largest lake. In between, snow-covered mountain ranges are criss-crossed by rugged passes where nomadic tribesmen herd their goats and sheep to patches of grazing land.

Opposite: Armenian church on Akdamar Island, Lake Van (© Valery Shanin/Dreamstime)

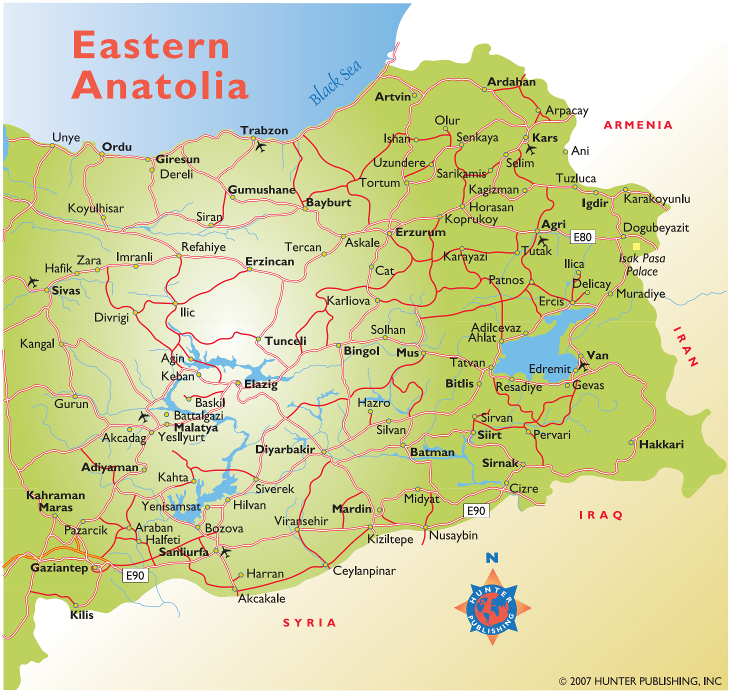
Spring flowers in front of Mount Ararat (© Middle Earth Travel)

Southeast Anatolia is a step into the Middle East with its Kurdish, Assyrian and Arabic populations. Their influence is seen in the clothes, the architecture and the spicy food. The center of the region is the Kurdish city of **Diyarbakir**, whose streets are lined with black and white mosques. The prophets' city of **Şanliurfa** and the golden triangle of Mardin, Midyat and Hasankeyf are enchanting.

GETTING HERE & GETTING AROUND

BY AIR

Eastern Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia are well served by airports with daily services from Ankara and Istanbul. The main air hubs include **Erzurum Airport** (10 km/six miles from the city center; ERZ; ☎ 0442-3272835); Malatya's **Erhac Airport** (26 km/16 miles west of the city; EHC; ☎ 0422-3223434); Gaziantep's **Oguzeli Airport** (20km/12 miles from the center; GZT); **Kars Airport** (seven km/four miles from the city; KSY; ☎ 0474-2230674) and Diyarbakir's **Kaplaner Airport** (three km/two miles from downtown Diyarbakir; DIY; ☎ 0412-2288401).


Eastern Anatolia
Black Sea
Unye
Ordu
Giresun
Dereli
Trabzon
Artvin
Ardahan
Arpacay
ARMENIA
Olur
Ishan
Senkaya
Kars
Ani
Uzundere
Sarikamis
Selim
Tortum
Tuzluca
Gumushane
Bayburt
Kagizman
Horasan
Igdir
Karakoyunlu
Koyulhisar
Siran
Koprukoy
Agri
Dogubeyazit
E80
Erzurum
Askale
Tutak
Isak Pasa Palace
Refahiye
Tercan
Karayazi
Ilica
Zara
Imranli
Erzincan
Cat
Patnos
Delicay
Hafik
Sivas
Muradiye
Ercis
Karliova
Divrigi
Ilic
Solhan
Adilcevaz
Ahlat
IRAN
Kangal
Tunceli
Bingol
Mus
Tatvan
Van
Agin
Edremit
Keban
Elazig
Bitlis
Resadiye
Gevas
Baskil
Hazro
Gurun
Battalgazi
Sirvan
Malatya
Silvan
Siirt
Pervari
Akcadag
Yesllyurt
Diyarbakir
Hakkari
Batman
Sirnak
Adiyaman
Kahta
Siverek
Cizre
Kahraman Maras
Yenisamsat
Hilvan
Midyat
Mardin
E90
IRAQ
Viransehir
Pazarcik
Araban
Bozova
Halfeti
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GETTING TO THE DOWNTOWN AREA

Malatya's Erhac Airport is the only eastern airport served by **Havaş shuttle buses** (☎ 0422-3265813, www.havas.com.tr). They run between the airport and Sivas Caddesi in the city center (one-way fare is $4). **Turkish Airlines** has shuttle services from the airport into the downtown area. You will need to take a taxi from all other airports into the city center areas.

BY BUS

Air-conditioned buses connect most cities, including Istanbul and Ankara, with towns in the East. However, the journeys are seriously long and you might want to break-up the trip or take a flight. Buses are most useful for traveling around the region itself.

Buses from Istanbul to Malatya (☎ 0422-2384768) take a massive 18 hours; from Ankara, they take 11 hours. Unless you have unlimited patience, avoid taking buses from Istanbul to cities such as **Erzurum** (*otogar*, ☎ 0442-2331200), **Kars** (*otogar*, ☎ 0474-2233333), **Şanliurfa** (*otogar*, ☎ 0266-8652906) and **Diyarbakir** (*otogar*, ☎ 0412-2211027) as they take around 24 hours to cross the country.

BY TRAIN

Typically slow, but scenic, railways run from Istanbul and Ankara to several cities in the region. To enjoy the long journey it is advisable to book a sleeper car. Trains are usually air-conditioned and have restaurant cars.

The ***Dogu Exspress*** runs from Istanbul's Haydarpaşa station to **Kars** via Ankara, Sivas, Erzincan and Erzurum. It departs at 8:35am and arrives in Kars at 10pm the next evening. There is no getting away from the fact that it is a seriously long time to spend on a train, but it does take in the length of the country. There is an additional daily service along the same route from Ankara. Tickets between Istanbul and Kars cost $24 for a seat and $41 for a double-berth sleeper car.

The ***Van Gölü Exspress*** connects Istanbul with **Tatvan**, on the shore of Lake Van. It cuts through the center of the country, taking in Kayseri, Sivas and Elaziğ on the way. The train departs daily from Haydarpaşa at 20:05pm and arrives in Tatvan at 1:09pm two days later. If you love train travel, this is a great trip. The fare between Istanbul and Tatvan is $23 for a seat and $40 for a double-berth sleeper car.

The ***Guney Exspress*** runs four days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday) from Istanbul to **Diyarbakir** in Southeast Anatolia. It also stops at Ankara, Kayseri, Sivas and Malatya. The train departs from Haydarpaşa at 20:05pm and gets to Diyarbakir at 7:40am two days later. The fare between Istanbul and Diyarbakir is $23 for a seat and $40 for a double-berth sleeper car.

The ***Toros Exspress*** between Istanbul and Gaziantep runs every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. It departs Haydarpaşa at 8:55am and arrives into Gaziantep at 11:35am the next day. A one-way fare is $24 for a seat and $41 for a double-berth sleeper car.

BY TAXI & *DOLMUS*

Yellow taxis are available in the cities from airports and bus and train stations. You can also find them in the downtown areas around hotels and at designated stands. They charge according to the usual rules, with a set day-rate per mile and a more expensive night rate. You can hire a taxi for a few hours to see more remote sights if you do not want to hang around for buses. If you want to visit Ani, you will need to take a taxi from Doğubeyazit (about $10 each way).

Dolmus minibuses operate in towns and cities. They can be infrequent in summer to sites such as Işak Paşa Saray and non-existent in winter.

> ***There are intermittent army checkpoints throughout the region and it is necessary to carry your driving license and identification. Travelers will encounter armed soldiers and armored tanks. Security at hotels and on the streets is not intimidating and should not deter travelers from making the trip. Some of the towns and cities are extremely poor. However, the Turks, Kurds and Arabs in the East and Southeast are incredibly welcoming.***

SIGHTSEEING

Eastern Anatolia

ERZINCAN

The East has an inauspicious start at Erzincan, a city that was completely rebuilt after earthquakes in 1939 and 1992. Its name, said to mean "life crusher," is testament to the devastation that the earthquakes have caused. As late as the 19th century, Erzincan was considered one of the most attractive cities in Asia. During this time it was predominately Armenian.

North of Erzincan, Route 885 leads to Gamushane and the Black Sea Coast. To the south, it heads into **Tunceli**, the only province with a majority Alevi population. Tunceli is a remote and mountainous area that has seen a succession of uprisings and sporadic violence since the mid-1930s when the leaders of the Turkish Republic changed its name from Dersim. Protests in 1937-8 led to many deaths on both sides. Since then, the honeycombed mountains are full of warrens and caves that have been used as hiding places for criminals and terrorists. The situation had improved, however, the recent resurgence of Kurdish activity may plunge it back into the dark days. You should hire a good off-road vehicle and check the security situation before traveling here.

SIGHTSEEING WITH THE STARS

Hunter's Travel Adventure guides cover all the sights and attractions, so you can decide what sparks your interest. But, vacation time is limited and precious, so we steer you to the best and the not-to-be-missed with a blatantly biased star system. Attractions that earn one star (✯) are worth a visit. Two stars (✯✯) mean you should exert a bit of effort to go there. When you see three stars (✯✯✯), just do it. You won't be sorry.

SOUTH FROM ERZINCAN

Tunceli town itself is less than exciting, but the surrounding landscape is one of wild natural beauty. The most attractive stop-off is **Ovacik**, located northwest of Tunceli. The Ovacik valley is a paradise of waterfalls and streams mixed with rampant flora and more than a few wild bears. South of Tunceli is **Keban Baraji**, one of many dams built in the region to power electricity and irrigate the fields in an effort to improve the lives of the impoverished population. The area around the dam, which sits at the confluence of the Euphrates and Murat rivers, was previously forced to rely on melting snow for farming. The enormous construction now means the region is set to become one of the major sources of grain in the country. The southern banks of the dam have a few interesting sites that make a welcome change from the dreary towns along the drive south.

Just inland is **Elaziğ**, a town built in the mid-19th century and named after Sultan Abdülaziz. The advent of the new Republic meant its name was changed slightly. Aside from an **Archaeology Museum** (open Tuesday-Saturday 9am-5pm; entrance fee), the town has little of historic interest, but it is clean and well ordered, and travelers may want to bask in the last outpost of civility before heading farther east.

THE LEANING TOWER OF HARPUT

Along the banks of the dam is Harput. The brick minaret on the town's **Ulu Camii** (Great Mosque) attempts to be Turkey's answer to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, although few visitors make the trek to see it desperately clinging on. The mosque gives the best view of the Byzantine castle. A seemingly impregnable fortress, it was ravaged both by the Mongols and by the Ottoman ruler Selim the Grim. Harput was once a thriving town, but earthquakes and the construction of modern Elaziğ led its population to abandon the town.

Follow Route 300 south through some dull steppe to **Malatya**, a town with an interesting history, but little to recommend it now. There are some old mosques and the remains of a citadel, which is significant for the unified resistance force made up of Christians and Muslims as they vied to save the town from Mongols. Malatya is the hometown of Ismet Inönü, the country's second president. A bronze statue of him on horseback graces the town square. It is the only place in the country this honor has been bestowed on someone other than Atatürk.

NEMRUT DAGI ✩✩

Atop a mountain south of Malatya is arguably the most extraordinary act of vanity outside of Egypt. The ruler of a local dynasty called Commagene, which ruled an area between Adiyaman and Gaziantep, had such powerful delusions of grandeur that he built a vast funeral monument to himself. The Commagene kingdom, established in the first century BC by a ruler called Mithradates, is believed to have descended from a branch of the Seleucids of Antioch. It made little impact on history aside from a few stilted uprisings against Rome. The kingdom was independent for the briefest of periods before being absorbed into the Roman Empire's Syrian province.

Vanity in stone

Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Yet Mithradates' son, Antiochus, dreamt up an ancestral heritage that included Alexander the Great and Darius the Great of Persia. This imagined importance was depicted in giant statues and reliefs of gods and kings surrounding his tumulus on a remote and inaccessible mountain 2,150 m/7,000 feet high. Only the pharaohs built more self-worshiping monuments.

TOURING THE STATUES

Nemrut Daği is one of the best-known sites east of Ankara and each year thousands of travelers make the trip for a glimpse of what man's warped thoughts can translate into. You can visit the site on a tour from Malatya, but it is best to make **Adiyaman** your base. The town is dull, but there are sufficient places to stay for one night. From here, a good asphalt road leads to Nemrut Daği. The most interesting sight along the way is the single-arch **Roman bridge** over Khata Çayi, a tributary of the Euphrates. Once at the mountain, a track continues almost to the summit. The sharp gradient means most people prefer to walk the final stretch, which takes about 20 minutes across rough ground with loose stones.

Most tour companies claim that to see the monument in all its glory, visitors should make an early trek up the mountain to reach the summit before the dawn casts it red and orange hues across the crumbling statues. However, this suggestion depends on the time of year, as the altitude makes it an incredibly cold journey. It also means making the difficult 80-km/50-mile drive in the dark.

The first glimpse of the summit is both awe-inspiring and surreal. Lying on the floor among the loose stones are the 10 m/33 foot-tall stone heads of the gods Apollo, Zeus, Hercules and the goddess Fortuna. Standing next to them is the bearded head of Antiochus, a sure sign of his self-obsession. His 50-m/165-foot reddish-brown tumulus rises out of the ground behind them.

Close by are the scattered remains of a lion and an eagle, which once guarded the entrance. On the opposite side of the tumulus are reliefs of more deities. It begs the question of how the subjects of such a small kingdom dragged these enormous rocks up the mountainside.

A tour of Nemrut Daği should include a stop at **Eski Kâhta** on the road back to Kâhta. Known in ancient times as Arsameia, it was the summer capital of the Commagene kingdom. A huge stone relief – somehow still standing upright – shows Mithridates shaking hands with Hercules. To the right is a tunnel leading down through the

Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Tumulus and statue of Antiochus

rocks. Even more interesting is **Yeni Kale**, down in the valley. The turreted castle, which was built by the Mamelukes, springs out from the rock. It is usually kept locked.

THE GAP PROJECT

All roads beyond Kâhta seem to lead to the massive **Atatürk Baraji**, the fourth-largest dam in the world. It was built as part of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (or GAP), a grand scheme to turn this dry and underdeveloped region into one of the world's major cotton- , tobacco- and grain-producing regions. The project will create 1.8 million jobs and lift the living standards of farmers across Southeastern Anatolia.

Started in 1974, GAP consists of a network of 22 dams, 19 hydro-electric plants and hundreds of kilometers of irrigation channels in the Euphrates-Tigris basin. The most impressive dam, Atatürk Baraji, stands a whopping 800 m/2,600 feet wide and 80 m/260 feet deep. It will irrigate three million hectares of land. Such a massive engineering project deserves a look and, indeed, it has already become a tourist attraction among Turks.

EAST FROM ERZINCAN

The alternative route from Erzincan is east along Route 88 to **Erzurum** (188 km/117 miles), the region's largest city and the highest. Set in a basin ringed by jagged mountains, Erzurum exists under a dour grey sky with concrete buildings to match. Along with other cities in this area, it has suffered damage at the hands of Mother Nature and the Russians, who occupied the city from 1877. While nothing could stop the earthquakes, the Russians were pushed out. In July 1919, Atatürk called the Erzurum Congress to draw up the boundaries of modern Turkey.

Among the buildings that survived the onslaught is **Yakutiye Medrese**, with its turquoise tiled minaret. The theology school was built by the Mongols in 1310 and named after the grandson of Gengis Khan. Nearby, close to the main road, is **Cifte Minare Medrese**, founded in 1253 by the Seljuk Sultan Alâeddin Keykubad II, who dedicated the building to his daughter. Her tomb lies in the grounds. This *medrese* is the city's most famous building, although there is little to justify the acclaim. It underwent restoration in the 1970s and has since sunk back into a state of neglect.

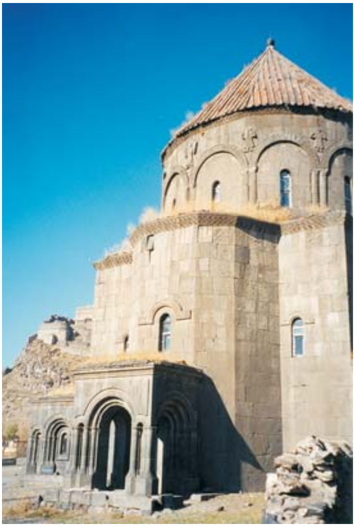
The only other notable building is the **Seljuk Ulu Camii** (Great Mosque), although it has little in the way of distinctive decoration. Erzurum is dwarfed by the great **Palandöken Daglari**, a range of snow-capped mountains that attracts skiers from across the country. East of Erzurum, the highway that cuts through the country on its way to Iran continues in the guise of E-88, skirting past Mount Ararat and Doğubeyazit to the border. Instead, take the left-hand fork at Horasan and follow Route 957 to Kars.

KARS

The road from Erzurum to Kars is dotted with foreboding mountains and forests full of wolves and bears. Travelers will also notice a stream of former Russian barracks, reminders of the Russo-Turkish wars fought over four centuries. Battles between Russian and Ottoman forces took place in this region between 1877 and the end of the First World War.

About 150 km/93 miles from Erzurum, **Şarikamiş** was the scene of an intense and badly calculated conflict in 1915. Ismail Enver, who pushed the Ottomans into the First World War, sought to display a show of strength against the Russians. Instead, Russian military power proved devastating and the Ottoman forces were driven back. Many of the troops froze to death in the harsh climate. The long winter and heavy snowfall is now put to good use with a ski resort at Şarikamiş boasting the longest runs in the country.

The city of Kars was founded by Armenians in the eighth century and passed into Georgian hands before yielding to the Ottomans in 1514. Its location meant it became a military frontier town for their battles with the Russians. The city's legacy as a Russian outpost is best evidenced in the modern part of the city. Its neo-classical buildings and grid layout are unique in Turkey. The city is interesting and has better facilities than you might expect, and the design makes it easy to get around on foot.


© Doron

Kumbet Camii, Kars

The old district is spread out at the foot of the **citadel**, which was completely destroyed by the forces of Tamerlane in 1386 and reconstructed in 1579. This quarter, straddling a river, is in a dreadful derelict state. Dirty, muddy streets are lined with shacks that have tarpaulin stretched across windows and roofs to shut out the icy wind. A US organization, called Global Heritage, is funding a regeneration project here. Below the citadel is the 10th-century **Church of the Apostles**, a stout domed church, which is usually locked. The base of the dome has crude reliefs representing the 12 Apostles. The **Tas Kopru**, or stone bridge, stands next to an old *hamam* that is withering with neglect.

> **TIP:** *Kars means snow in Turkish and for good reason. Temperatures in winter drop below −30°C/-22°F and there can be upward of 10 m/33 feet of snow. The winter here is long, stretching from October until May. If you plan to travel during this period, plan your trip well and dress for extreme temperatures.*

THE HAUNTED RUINS OF ANI ☆☆

© Samantha Lafferty

The haunted ruins of Ani

Most visitors come to Kars to see the Armenian ruins of Ani, pressed against the present-day border with Armenia. On the way out to Ani, stop at **Kars Museum** (Kars Muzesi; Cumhuriyet Caddesi; open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30am-12:30pm, 1:30pm-5:30pm; entrance fee), which has some beautiful woodcarvings and a collection of coins found in the surrounding region. Take the road opposite the museum and follow it for 45 km/28 miles through a flat, dull plain passing a series of hamlets with flat-roofed houses resembling stables. Ani (open 8:30am-midday, 1pm-5:30pm; entrance fee) is in the village of Ocakli on the border. To reach Ani without a car, take an organized tour or, in summer, a *dolmus* minivan from Kars.

The city was named after the Urartian fertility goddess Anahid. A millennium ago, Ani rivaled Byzantium as one of the great cities of the Christian world. At its height, the Armenian capital had 200,000 inhabitants. Now all that remains are the gaunt, but beautiful remains of churches and mosques randomly scattered across a vast expanse of earth that is covered in wildflowers once the snow recedes.

Ani was built in the fourth century BC and became the Armenian capital in 961. Its location brought wealth along the caravan route and consecutive invasions by the Seljuk Turks, Georgians and Mongols. The Armenians were known for their fine craftsmanship and the Seljuk warriors no doubt looked at the great walls and intricately carved gates and churches within Ani and used this as their inspiration for their own architectural style.

In 1319, the city was devastated by an earthquake. Its problems did not end there. Russia invaded in 1878 and held the city until 1921 when Turkey recaptured it during the War of Independence. Since then, controversy and vicious words have flown across the narrow river gorge that separates Turkey and Armenia. Turkish soldiers, on a seemingly futile mission, still guard Ani, even in the perishing depths of winter.

Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Domes cathedral at Ani in tatters

TOURING THE CITY

From the outside, travelers may be deceived by Ani. On the edge of a bleak stretch of road is a long sandstone wall with a high, double gate known as **Alp Arslan Kapisi**. The walls of the city lead to **Arpa Çayi**, a river hidden down a steep ravine. It is only when you enter the gate that the enormity of the site and its immense silence become apparent.

A route of sorts is laid out along a series of signposted paths. Among the most enthralling sites are the partially-destroyed 11th-century **Chapel of the Redeemer** and the 13th-century **Resimli Kilise** (Church of Pictures), aptly covered with beautiful frescoes. Also at the far end of the site, near the border, is **Ani Cathedral**, with its pockmarked domed roof that lets in flashes of sunlight to illuminate the wall carvings. This is the largest Armenian church still standing in Turkey. Next, you come to **Menucer Camii**, an 11th-century mosque that, strangely, was built during Armenian rule. Other churches, largely derelict, are dotted along the paths.

MOUNT ARARAT

© Middle Earth Travel

Shepherd in search of grazing land, Mount Ararat

Along E-80 south from Kars to Doğubeyazit is the striking sight of Mount Ararat on the left. The bottom of the mountain is obscured by a haze of sunlight and smog and it looks as if the snow-drenched peak is suspended above the ground. The very top of the mountain, which rises to 5,137 m/ 16,850 feet, is often sliced off by wisps of cloud.

The Old Testament records that Noah's Ark came to rest on the mountain after the great flood. Farther along the road, you can look back to see its smaller twin, **Little Mount Ararat**, which stands at 3,896 m/ 12,780 feet. The mountain is now accessible for trekkers, although permission is required from the Turkish Government.

The mountain perks up what is otherwise a desolate road down to **Doğubeyazit**, a dirty frontier town close to the border with Iran. The streets are filled with men and young boys wandering about with seemingly nowhere to go. Children in filthy clothes hound visitors to buy packets of tissues and cigarettes.

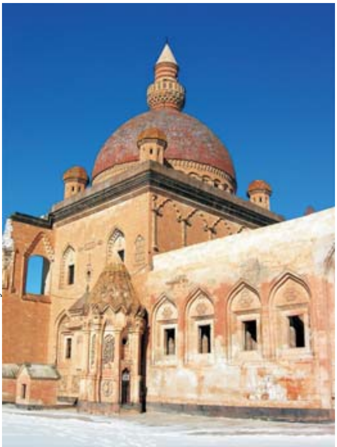
ISAK PASA SARAYI (PALACE) ✪✪

The charms of Doğubeyazit's only attraction could not be a more stark contrast to the town itself. Işak Paşa Sarayi sits on top of a rugged mud-brown mountain six km/four miles from town (open 8:30am-midday, 1pm-5:30pm; entrance fee) A good asphalt road runs from the town to the palace and a *dolmus* service operates in summer.

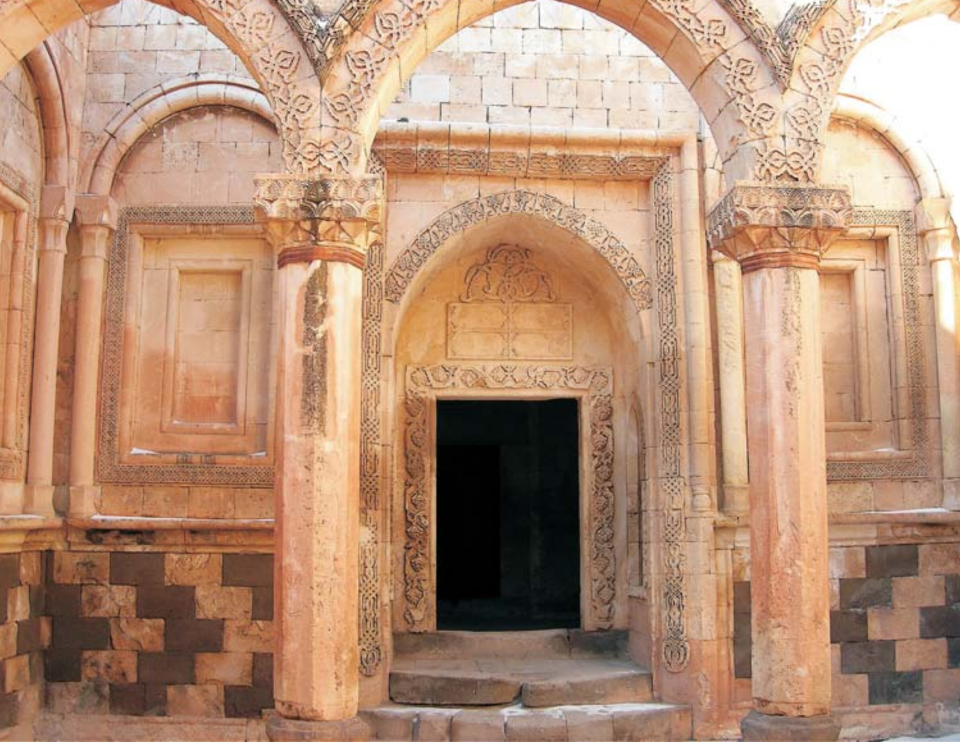
© Samantha Lafferty

Doğubeyazit was a frontier city on the Silk Road leading from Tabriz to Trabzon. Situated on the border between Ottoman Turkey and Iran, it enjoyed tremendous wealth. The palace was built by Işak Paşa, son of a local ruling family who controlled the region in the 18th century. He gravitated to governor, but was then ejected from his post by Selim the Grim, who deemed him too opulent.

The palace façade has been extensively restored but the building remains roofless. Despite this, most of the elaborate stone carvings can still be seen at the gateways and around the walls and windows, an indication of past splendor. The palace is built around a series of courtyards. The first is wide and surrounded with entrances to cellars and dungeons. The second courtyard leads to the living quarters and harem, a labyrinth of small rooms. A marble mosque with a great dome and striped minaret is tucked into the back of the palace. Inside, there is an ornate white marble mihrab and pillars. A few scratchy blue and red flower paintings can be seen on the dome. A walkway leads to a dining room with stunning stone carvings along the walls.


© Samantha Lafferty

Inner courtyard, Isak Pasa



Elaborate carvings in the living quarters of Isak Pasa (© Samantha Lafferty)

THE ROAD TO VAN

From Doğubeyazit, E-99 skims the Iranian border as it climbs over mountains and descends on the north shore of Van Gölü (Lake Van). Travelers with enough time for a quick detour are encouraged to stop-off at beautiful **Muradiye Şelalesi waterfall**, 90 km/56 miles north of Van. Though not tall, it is a broad cascade of water. The best view is from the opposite side of a chewed-up wooden bridge that makes you want to close your eyes and hope. On the other side, it is possible to trek down into the base of the falls. If you are lucky enough to visit when the temperature is freezing, the falls will be frozen and even more alluring.

VAN

Return to the highway and continue along the eastern shore of the lake, which is ringed by high, snow-splattered mountains to the city of Van. The city has little to recommend it, particularly as it is set back from the mammoth lake (although this may not be for long as rapid development means the tower blocks are sprawling ever close to the shoreline). Van is an odd mix of modern blocks and ramshackle wooden houses set along muddy streets.

Once called Tuspa, the city was the capital of the powerful Urartu kingdom from the eighth century BC. Some scholars have claimed that Van was the real Garden of Eden, although most travelers would reject that without picking up a history book. The city was an important part of Armenia until it was ceded to the Byzantines immediately before the Battle of Manzikert. This came back to bite when the Armenians flattened the city during World War I as they fought for an independent state. On entering the city, the Turkish army leveled almost everything that was left. The streets were running with the blood of civilians caught in the crossfire.

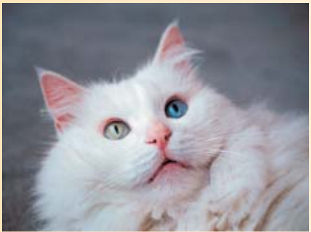
In the old city of Van, all that remains is a bleak citadel with dark, heavy walls overlooking a mish-mash of appalling mud-brick houses, some with sheep penned into yards. A burial chamber on one side of the citadel, marked by barbed wire, is the only defense against falling off the edge of the rocky mound. Below the citadel are two churches that have been converted into mosques. They appear unused and are in a terrible state of neglect, with graffiti and smashed windows. Behind them are a couple of watchtowers.

A CITY OF CASTLES

Although far from a fairytale destination, Van is sometimes referred to as the “City of Castles” because of its collection of Urartian fortresses. Among the best is **Çavuştepe Castle** (open daily 7am-6pm; entrance fee) is 25 km/16 miles from the city center in Çavuştepe Village. The castle was built during the time of King Sarduri between 764 and 734 BC. There is little left of the ruins, although it is possible to see some granite stone with hieroglyphics.

Toprakkale Castle (five km/three miles east of Van; open access) became the second capital of the kingdom. As well as the castle walls, there are water cisterns and a temple.

Hoşap Castle (60 km/37 miles from Van on the road to Hakkari) was built in 1643 by the Kurdish ruler, Süleyman Mahmudi, on the site of an earlier Urartian fortress. The first sight is of a turreted crown lying across a parched rock face. After crossing a stone bridge and continuing up the mountain, you reach the imposing entrance gate set in a round tower. Above the iron doors (now shut indefinitely) is an ensemble of red and yellow stonework with an unusual teardrop-shaped emblem in the center.



Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

Van is famous for its cat, a pure white, longhaired breed, which has one blue eye and the other green. Sightings of the cats are now rare and you will probably have to make do with the bizarre giant statue of a mother cat and kitten in the center of the main highway in Van.

LAKE VAN ✮

The shoreline of Turkey's largest lake with its bays and inlets is picturesque. The shabby city is left behind in favor of summer villas and cafés. The water is clean and sapphire-blue, even though the city air smells of burning coal and the streets are dank. The lake was formed by a volcanic eruption and is highly alkaline. Poorer locals still to wash their clothes in its frothy water and hang them to dry in colorful lines almost anywhere, including along the railings hemming in ancient ruins.

In the middle of the lake is the rocky **Akdamar Adasi**, one of four islands, which has a solitary red-stone Armenian church. The 10th-century **Church of the Holy Cross** was built by King Gagik. It has won acclaim for its rich decoration, a real show of Armenian workmanship. The exterior walls have carved reliefs of the Old Testament, including the banishing of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and the birth of Jesus Christ. Extensive renovations have taken place on the church over the past couple of years. Gacik also built a palace and a monastery on the island, although scant trace of them remains.

To reach Akdamar take a *dolmus* from Van to Gevas and join one of the boats going out to the island. The church can just be seen from the jetty jutting out into the water. This is the most attractive stretch of the lake, with constantly changing colors and moods in accordance with the shifting skies. Aim to depart Van just before sunrise and you can guarantee a symphony of shades will be sprayed across the lake.

Continue from Gevas along the shore to Tatvan on the southwestern edge of the lake. Beyond Tatvan, a road branches off to **Nemrut Daği** (15 km/nine miles from Tatvan; not to be confused with the statue-topped Nemrut Daği north of Adiyaman), which has the country's largest crater lake. Farther along the western shore, **Süphan Daği** rises 4,058 m/13,300 feet above the lake. It is the second-highest volcano in Turkey and has become popular with mountain climbers. At the far

Akdamar Island (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

north edge of the lake is **Erciş**, an enclave that is home to a small Afghani community.

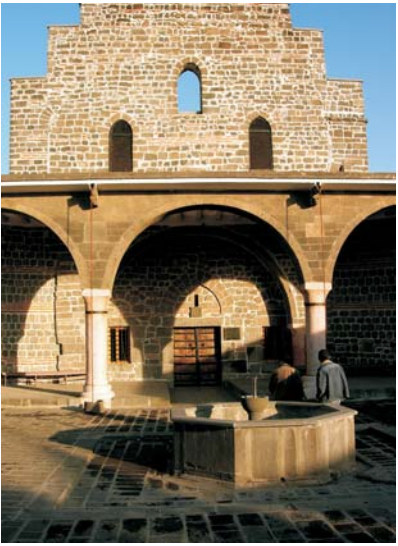
SOUTH FROM VAN

Leaving the shore of Lake Van at Tatvan heading to Diyarbakir, the first stop along E-99 is **Bitlis**, one of the oldest towns in the region. Bitlis was fortified by trade along the Silk Road. It is a pretty town with a winding castle and an abundance of shops selling honey and nuts. There is a half-ruined caravansary on the road up to the castle. In the center of town is **Gökmeydan Camii**, with its stone built minaret decorated with pretty tiles and carvings, and several Seljuk tombs dotted along the river. Farther along the road is **Seljuk Ihlasiye Medrese,** which dates from the 13th century. It was an early university and considered a pioneering school for science. The building is now used as government and tourism offices and is well worth a look. Beyond Bitlis, the road continues into Southeastern Anatolia.

The alternative route from Van would be to continue south along Route 975 past Hoşap Castle. However, the landscape is barren and the security situation often dangerous. This highway runs close to the Iraqi border and through the mountainous hideouts of the PKK terrorist group. This is a route best avoided.

Southeast Anatolia

THE ROAD TO DIYARBAKIR



© Samantha Lafferty

Pausing for thought, Diyarbakir

The landscape between Bitlis and Diyarbakir can almost be seen in two halves. Closest to Bitlis, a good road runs adjacent to a shallow stream. Above, harsh eastern winters have carved out strange cylindrical shapes in the rocks, among which grows a profusion of silver and red trees. Farther along, the scene becomes increasingly shabby. Outlaying villages are dominated by dusty, trash-strewn fields, mud-brick shacks and half-built blocks that serve as shops. Horses sporting bright Kurdish kilims trot about.

DIYARBAKIR

The outskirts of Diyarbakir itself show signs that the city is drawing back Kurds who abandoned the east in search of safer places to live during the troubles of the past 20 years. There are new estates of smart houses being built along the road into the center of town. Unfortunately, this regeneration has not been duplicated in the old part of the city. Back streets around the citadel and bazaar are grimy with ramshackle houses in contrasting drab grey or vivid, Caribbean colors. Young children play football with cardboard boxes and whatever else they can find. The houses barely have a lick of paint remaining; the rest has flaked off to reveal decaying timber. The **citadel** is nevertheless interesting once you get used to the streets, which often have water sloshing down them in scenes reminiscent of Victorian London.

Plan to spend a day in Diyarbakir to appreciate the lively street atmosphere of Turkey's principal Kurdish city. Often, Westernized Turks warn visitors to expect a hostile reception and be on guard for robberies. In reality, the locals are extremely engaging and you should not be surprised if you are asked to join a family for lunch.

THE CITY WALLS

The black basalt **battlements** in the city of Amida, as the Romans called it, were built to defend Rome's eastern provinces against the Persians and they are the city's chief attraction. As spectacular as the walls are, they failed to stop the Byzantines and Persians contesting the city's ownership. In 638 AD, the Arab Beni Bakr tribe captured the city and named it Diyar Bakr, district of the Bakr people. The 5.5-km/3.4-mile walls originally had 78 towers and many of these have survived. The most interesting are **Harput Gate** and **Mardin Gate**, which still has its original studded iron doors.

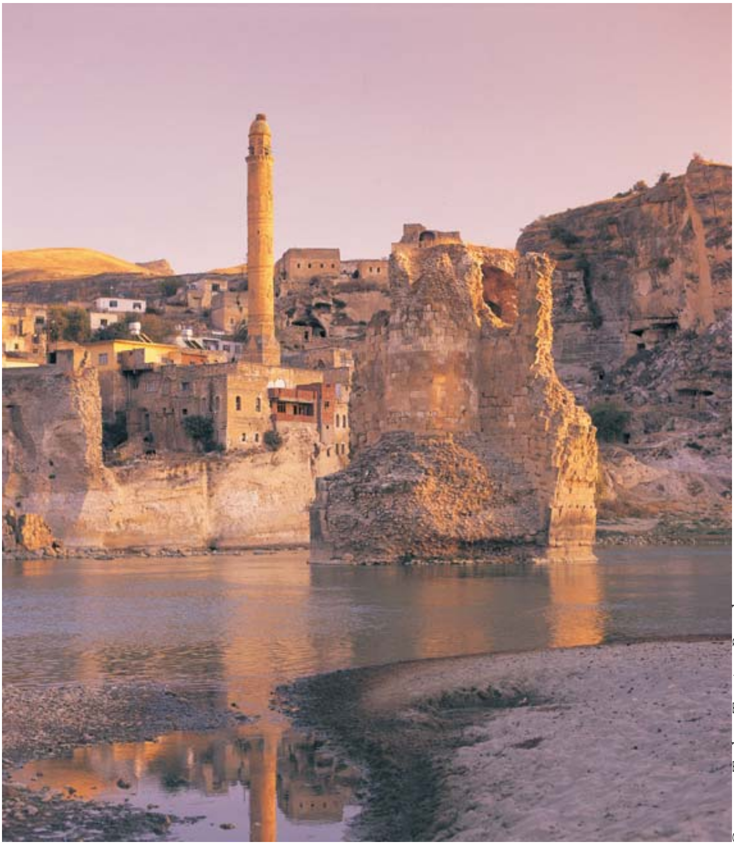
The city's main street, **Izzet Paşa Caddesi**, runs in between these two gates. It is lined with mosques, *medreses* and caravan inns built of intermingled black and white squares like on a chessboard. Some of the mosques are dangerously dilapidated. The best preserved is **Ulu Camii,** halfway down the avenue.

ENTERING TURKEY'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE ☆☆

After Diyarbakir, follow Route 370 through the town of Batman. The name is the most interesting thing about the town, which is dominated by its oil fields and factories. Beyond it, Route 975 crosses the Biblical Tigris River to the ancient and remarkable village of Hasankeyf.

HASANKEYF

The tragedy of Hasankeyf is that it is destined to be flooded as part of the GAP project. All that will remain is the minaret of a mosque, which is so high it almost strikes the sky. Until then, explore Hasankeyf's labyrinth of caves that rival those in Cappadocia. Amid the caves that border the river are the remnants of a city with mosques, two palaces and even an ancient shopping complex. Climb the rough steps from a pathway on the opposite side to the river and



Courtesy Turkey Tourism Board

The ancient city of Hasankeyfe is destined to be flooded

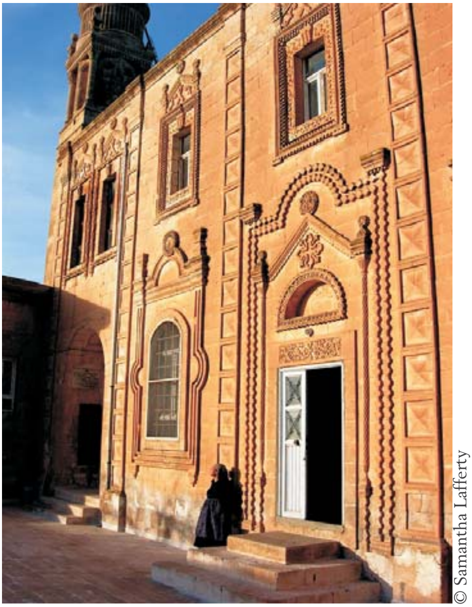
look down the sheer rock face. The supports for a collapsed bridge look like giant's legs striding across the Tigris.

Until 30 years ago, the caves were homes for the 35,000-strong population. Now, they are used more as stores and stables, with the village's remaining 2,000 inhabitants occupying stone houses clustered around a new bridge. A couple of elderly women still live high in the caves. Their laundry hangs out in makeshift courtyards.

When the weather is fine, tea stalls and a small market are set up on the edge of the Tigris. Summer temperatures shoot to 50°C/120°F in summer and scorpions menace the locals. It is best to visit anytime except June to August.

MIDYAT

About 35 km/22 miles south of Hasankeyf is Midyat, a step out of Turkey into the Middle East. The town stands in Upper Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in the center of a high limestone plateau. The initial view of Midyat is that of a rather ordinary Turkish town with a fountain in the center. Turn left at the police station and you will enter something altogether more resplendent: An entire town of walled alleyways and tiny squares around which stand gloriously restored honey-colored stone houses and churches. The old quarter has few cars and the only noise is the constant chatter and laughter of children who run around freely.


© Samantha Lafferty

Suryani church, Midyat

The Syrian Orthodox church was founded here, and since 1478 Midyat has been the metropolitan diocese. The Syrian Orthodox people, also known as Suryani or Assyrians, are among the oldest indigenous inhabitants of the region. In 38 AD, when the region was still part of the Roman Empire, they rejected paganism in favor of Christianity. Today, however, the population is dwindling. Their tongue, called Syriac, a form of Aramaic, is one of four languages that can be heard in the town. Midyat also has Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish communities, making the town a rare mosaic of cultures and religions.

While the local people are not prosperous, Midyat has some wealthy benefactors judging by the restoration of the ancient architecture and the grand villas built on its outskirts. People do not seem to mind visitors wandering around, pushing open doors on to courtyards to watch women drawing water from their wells or tending their chickens. Many of the roofs have iron bedsteads on them ready for when the intense heat drives the residents out for a night under the stars.

The most prominent building in the town is the government guesthouse, **Devlet Konuk Evi**. The three-storey volcanic stone house is more of a museum than a guesthouse, although visitors can stay here. The house has a gated courtyard leading up narrow stone stairs to a broad balcony which looks out past the town's many church bell towers and the minarets of its mosques to the almond and copper-colored Mesopotamian plains. The building is covered with stone carvings. Equally beautiful is **Mor Sarbel Church**, with its graceful bell tower rising above an engraved façade.

Close to the entrance of the old quarter, a caravansary has been partially restored to include a courtyard restaurant and art gallery. About 20 km/12 miles south of town is **Suryani Mor Gabriel Monastery**, one of the world's oldest.

MARDIN

From Midyat, Route 380 brings you to Mardin (63 km/39 miles), another Suryani town made up of biscuit-colored Arab-style houses on the edge of the Mesopotamian plains. The approach to town passes a new housing development before old Mardin appears like a stripe across the mountain. A Byzantine citadel runs the length of the flat summit.

Mardin is similar in style to Midyat, with an abundance of squat buildings decorated with carvings of fruit, flowers and a variety of symbolic emblems. Yet the town is slightly more shabby in parts and feels like less of a museum town.

Because it climbs the mountain, Mardin is built in steep terraces. Standing on one level means you look down on the roofs of houses below. The main thoroughfare, Cumhuriyet Caddesi, is thronged with stores and a market where men stand with live turkeys hoping for a buyer. Walk up the steps from the main street towards the **citadel**. **Sultan Isa Zinciriye Medrese**, built in 1385, sits at the foot of the castle. The theology school once housed the town's museum, but this has since moved to a grand building on Cumhuriyet Caddesi that has previously served as a Suryani church and a military garrison. The building is more interesting than the collection. From the balcony, you can look down on the spikes of three mosques in the foreground and the vast plains that extend into Syria.

Deyrulzarafan Monastery

Deyrulzarafan Monastery (open daily 9am-11:30am, 1pm-3:30pm) is 10 km/six miles from Mardin in the middle of an empty plain. Aside from the imposing fourth-century stone building, monks' caves are the only other feature.

The monastery was the seat of the patriarch until the 1930s when he moved to Damascus. It is still used as a monastery and orphanage. The architecture is beautiful, but the atmosphere is not particularly welcoming to visitors.

The monastery's **Church of St. Hananyo** has a 100-year-old tapestry of the crucifixion as well as others depicting Mary and Child and St. George and the Dragon. Two thrones, one 500 years old and the other 350 years old, are lavishly decorated in gold and red cloth. The church's walnut doors are also five centuries old.

Strangely, the monastery has a **laboratory** dating from the fourth century. It was used for medical experiments until it was turned into a cemetery for patriarchs, who were buried into the stone walls while sitting in their thrones. Down a cold and foreboding staircase in the depths of the monastery is a 3,000-year-old **temple**, where people would worship the sun and sacrifice animals.

SANLIURFA, CITY OF PROPHETS ☆☆

West of Mardin E-90 leads to Şanliurfa (188 km/117 miles), or Urfa, as it is known. The prefix, which means "glorious," was awarded to the city by Atatürk for its role in containing French troops in 1920. Urfa is a distinctly Arab city witnessed in the style of dress, the flat-roofed stone houses crowded into tight alleys and the bustling atmosphere. Travelers should head straight for the bazaar district, where the historic sites are located.

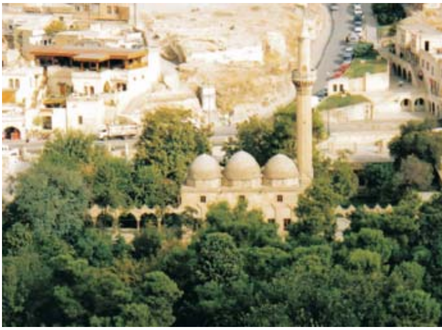
The first stop should be the **citadel** (open everyday 7:30am until dusk; entrance fee), built by the Crusaders, who twice took the city from the Arabs. Urfa was the birthplace of Abraham, who is claimed by Muslims, Christians and Jews. According to legend, the evil King Nimrod catapulted the prophet Abraham off the citadel towards a funeral pyre. God intervened and turned the fire into a pool of water and the wood into fish. The two Corinthian columns on the top of the citadel are supposedly the towers used to hold the catapult.

Today, Muslim pilgrims come to stroll around the sacred lake and pray at the adjoining **Halil Ar-Rahman mosque**, which is as graceful as India's Taj Mahal. This is particularly popular after dusk when the lake, honey-colored arches and willow trees are illuminated. The pool (Balikli Göl, or Carp Lake) is full of carp, said to be the sacred fish created by God to save Abraham. Visitors often buy chickpeas from nearby stalls and toss them into the lake, transforming the water into a wriggling black and gold mass. Otherwise, the atmosphere of the complex is one of calm reverence.

People feeding carp at Halil Ar-Rahman mosque

Abraham's Cave

From Balikli Göl, pathways lead through a pretty garden complex with cafés beside a smaller lake with water spurting out of a marble fountain. On the opposite side is **Ulu Camii**, the city's oldest mosque, which has also served as a synagogue and a church. The more interesting mosque is **Mevlid-i-Halil Camii**, set within a broad tree-lined courtyard. At the far corner of the complex is the cave (open daily 8:30am-5:30pm; entrance fee) where Abraham was born. Visitors are advised to dress conservatively and enter through the separate male and female sections. Inside, there is little to see save for a couple of personal items said to belong to the prophet. However, it is a place of religious significance to Muslims, who come to pray.



STREET CULTURE

As an Arab city, Urfa is very much about street culture and the best place to experience this is in the vibrant **bazaar**. This is the most interesting of the markets in the East. Noise is everywhere, as men barter over the price of strong tobacco and leather or jibe each other while they play backgammon and dominoes at low tables in the alleyways. The vivid colors of silks and woven shawls in the **textile bazaar** contrast against the mud-colored walls of the inns. Nearby, the smells of the **herbalists' bazaar** mingle with those of the **coppersmiths' market**. Other stalls sell carpets and kilims, meat, sweets, handbags and locally produced tobacco, which is sold from sackcloth bags. In the middle of the bazaar is a former Ottoman customs house built in the 1500s. Its courtyard now serves as a café.

HARRAN

Route 885 due south of Urfa runs through flat plains all the way to Syria. It is easy to take the wrong road on an excursion to Harran (35 km/22 miles). The sign for the left-hand turning to the village is

Harran's mud houses (courtesy Turkey Tourism Board)

unhelpfully 200 m/656 feet beyond the actual turning. If you miss the turn and continue straight along Route 885 you will reach Akçakale, an odd frontier town on the Syrian border. The town was literally sliced in half, separating families into two countries.

The correct road to Harran leads into a land of brown-mud windowless dome dwellings typically housing families of 15 or 20 people. Travelers come here either for its association with the Bible or to see the conical houses. Those who have seen old photographs of Harran imagine nothing but a desolate, muddy plain with a handful of these beehive houses. Instead, the town is becoming more built-up with a couple of motels and shops on the outskirts. Many villagers live in concrete houses and use their traditional mud huts to court tourists. Some sell traditional blue cotton and sequined headscarves and jackets. Harran's attraction as a tourist site has spoiled local children, who beg continuously and make it difficult to walk around. A ruined Roman castle and the occasional wall and tower of an ancient university lie on a mound above the houses.

THE ROAD TO GAZIANTEP

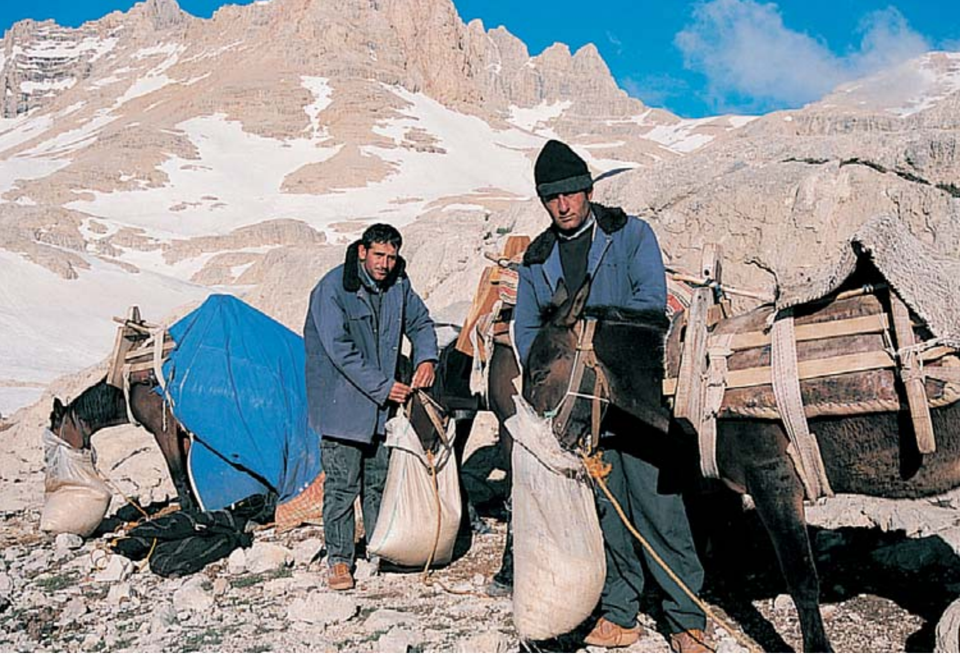
There is little to distract visitors on the road from Şanliurfa to Gaziantep (137 km/85 miles). The main detour is to **Birecik**, set on the banks of another of Turkey's great rivers, the Euphrates. The town looks pretty at dusk. Unfortunately, the fading light cannot disguise that it is set against a roaring highway brimming with trucks heading into the industrial powerhouses of Gaziantep and Iskenderun.

© Frank Wouters

Birecik is home to one of only two sanctuaries in the world for the bald ibis, a protected species. The center (open access; donations welcome) is reached by taking the road from the back of the market, turning right along the river. It started with 11 birds that lived in the caves of the town. A breeding program has increased the population to 83 birds.

GAZIANTEP

Gaziantep is one of Turkey's great powerhouses, responsible for about a 10th of the country's industrial output. It is now a modern city spinning out from the grassy mound of its ancient citadel. A few old timber mansions survive in varying states of repair around the bazaar.



Only mules can tackle the harsh terrain in the mountains around Gaziantep (© Explore)

Like neighboring Urfa, Antep held its ground against French troops at the end of the First World War. Atatürk recognized this stand by adding the name Gazi to the city, meaning "Fighter for the Faith." Some churches and houses still bear scars of the battle.

For decades the city's greatest attractions were its pistachios, spicy kebabs and craft market, where men still make copper pots and furniture inlaid with mother of pearl. But the discovery of the **Zeugma mosaics**, now on display at **Gaziantep Muzesi** ★★ (Gaziantep Museum; open Tuesday-Sunday 8am-12pm, 1pm-5pm, closes at 4:30pm in winter; entrance fee) has given the city new kudos. The collection includes some of the finest mosaics ever found and is threatening to overshadow the more famous display in Antakya.

Seleucus Nicator I, one of Alexander the Great's generals, founded Zeugma on the banks of the Euphrates in the third century BC. It flourished under the Commagene kingdom and the Romans to become one of the world's largest cities. It was a garrison town with more than 6,000 soldiers, and its position on the east-west axis meant it attracted trade and wealth. Merchants built villas with rooms and swimming pools decorated with mosaics depicting mythological scenes. All of this grandeur was eventually destroyed by an earthquake.

LOST ROMAN ART

Most of the exhibits in the museum's collection were unearthed between 1999 and 2000 in a village near Nizip, which was later flooded by the Birecik Dam. The excavation project became a frantic scramble by archaeologists to save as much Roman art as they could before it was lost forever. The affair caused an international outcry as the government faced pressure to halt the dam. In June 2000, the remaining treasures of Zeugma disappeared.

The mosaics depicting scenes from Greek mythology are incredibly well preserved, with vivid colors and details that appear to dance off the walls and floors. The most dramatic exhibits are the recreation of the dining room of the Poseidon House and the portrayal of a Gypsy Girl with her haunting eyes.

ADVENTURES

ADVENTURES ON FOOT

MOUNT ARARAT

The biggest adventure in Eastern Anatolia is climbing the biblical Mount Ararat, which looms over the borders of Turkey, Armenia and Iran. Its location means it has borne the brunt of security controls and access was banned for almost a decade until 1998. The expedition is now once again possible, although it is not easy to say for how long. The lure of finding a few rotten remains of Noah's Ark, which persistent tales suggest landed here after the Great Flood, is bringing a steady stream of climbers and creating potential environmental problems. There are already mutterings about restricting access once again.

For now, climbers can obtain permits from the Turkish government to make the summit climb. Application forms are available at the Turkish Embassy and permission is usually granted within three months. If you book a guided expedition, which is recommended, the tour company will organize the permit for you.

> **TIP:** *Beware of local agencies that claim to be able to arrange permission within a shorter period and do not hand over your original passport.*

Ararat is a treeless inactive volcano capped by ice and snow year-round. The harsh winter weather means climbing is best between July and September. It is also more difficult to find mules to carry equipment in winter and the cost may be higher. The climb takes four or five days depending on the tour company. Avoid companies that try to pack the trip into three days. This will be a rush and can result in altitude sickness. Even on longer climbs, altitude problems can occur. To help avoid them you need to drink plenty of water and other fluids.

© Hayk Harutyunyan/Dreamstime

View of Mount Ararat from Armenia

Making the Climb

Trips to Mount Ararat start at **Doğubeyazit**, a featureless town close to the Armenian border. From here, it is a one- to two-hour drive to the ghostly village of **Eli**, where donkeys can be hired to carry camping equipment. The ascent begins with a trek from Eli to **Yeşil camp** at an altitude of 3,200 m/10,500 feet. The five-hour trek is not difficult. The terrain varies between upland meadows and scree with loose stones.

Good tour companies plan to keep the second day for acclimatization with a couple of hours easy trekking around the upland meadows. On the next day, there is a six-hour trek to the high camp at an altitude of 4,200 m/13,780 feet. The campsite is rocky compared with Yeşil camp and has views across to Kücük Mount Ararat, separated from the larger mountain by a lava plateau.

The climb to the summit starts before dawn and takes about 10 hours, allowing time to descend back to camp. The first part of this climb is over volcanic scree and boulders and patches of snowy ground. The incline becomes steep on the glaciated upper slopes and there can be strong winds at the peak. In good weather, there are views of the upper reaches of the Kaçkar Mountains to the north, across into Armenia and Iran and down to Süphan mountain on Lake Van. The final day on the mountain consists of a camp clean-up and a trek back to your support vehicle. For more information see www.climbararat.com.

WHAT TO PACK

The changeable climate (hot in summer on the lower reaches and very cold at the peak) means climbers must come fully prepared. You will need a day sack and cold weather gear, including thermal base layers, a wind and waterproof jacket, hiking boots compatible with crampons, a hat and gloves and a four-season sleeping bag. Sunscreen and sports sunglasses or ski glasses are essential. Check whether your climbing group provides equipment. Otherwise, expect to require crampons, rope and possibly an ice axe depending on the time of year. Pack some basic medical supplies.

Guided Expeditions

An expedition to Mount Ararat can booked in the US and Turkey. The trip is expensive, so make sure you get value. Some tour companies bolt on a few days of sightseeing before and after the climb, while others are simply focused on the climb itself. Permits for the climb cost $50.

KE Adventure (US ☎ 800-497-9675, www.keadventure.com) has an 11-day expedition to Mount Ararat that includes four days in Istanbul. The trip costs $2,495.

Middle Earth Travel (☎ 0384-2712559, www.middleearthtravel.com) has an eight-day trip with about five days on Mount Ararat, depending on weather conditions, and trips to Van and Işak Paşa Sarayi. The trip costs $900.

Anatolian Adventures (☎ 0216-4185222, www.anatolianadventures.com) runs an 11-day expedition including time in Istanbul ($1,290) and an eight-day trip focused on the climb ($850).

A useful contact for cheaper trekking and climbing expeditions is Mehmet Ertuğrul of the **Mountaineering and Adventure Sports Organization** (☎ 0472-3127119), based in Doğubeyazit.

SÜPHAN DAGI

Mount Süphan is the second-highest peak in the country, rising 2,400 m/7,900 feet above Lake Van. Süphan's rugged volcanic summit has a small ice-covered crater lake. Throughout the winter, Süphan receives four m/13 feet of snow, making June through September the best time to go. That is unless you plan to join in the increasingly popular sport of heli-skiing down the mountain.

© Murat Erdogan

Mount Süphan

The ascent is generally made on the eastern face with views of Lake Van. To reach this flank, take the coastal road that circles Lake Van. In the stretch between Adilcevaz and Erciş, turn north to Aydinlar village. From there, continue to Kicgili village, where guides can be hired. From Aydinlar, it is a short, steep trek to the base camp at Süphan plateau. It takes eight-10 hours to climb to the peak and descend back to camp. The slopes are barren and straightforward to climb, although there is no marked route on the mountain.

ADVENTURES ON SNOW

PALANDÖKEN

The first thing you notice about Palandöken is the extreme cold. The mountain, six km/four miles from Erzurum, exists in permanently low temperatures and is drenched in three m/10 feet of powdery snow from December until the end of May, giving it the longest ski season in the country. Cross-country skiing can be done for about seven months of the year.

Palandöken has some of the best runs in the country, making it popular with advanced skiers. Instructors are on hand for beginners and ski equipment can be hired.

SARIKAMIS

In the far northeast, 60 km/37 miles from Kars, is the equally chilly resort of Şarikamiş, noted for having the longest ski run in the country among its nine tracks. Despite Kars being the coldest place in the country, the snow is only good for alpine skiing from December until mid-March. The resort typically receives half as much snow as Palandöken. The pine-covered ski runs are at an altitude of 2,000-2,634 m/6,500-8,650 feet. Equipment and instructors are available for hire at the ski center. Your best sources of information about this resort are the local hotels.

SHOPPING

In **Diyarbakir**, the main shopping mall is the glitzy **Diyar Galeria** next to the Dedeman Hotel. The old **bazaar** in the citadel district is awash with jewelry shops, although assessing the quality of merchandise is anyone's guess. The sights and sounds of **Şanliurfa's bazaar district** should not be missed. Eight thriving markets are interwoven among alleyways in the center of this Arab city.

Gaziantep is surprisingly good for shopping. Its boulevards are thronged with big-name stores such as Adidas and United Colors of Benetton. The best shopping mall is **Bedesten Migros**, which has a supermarket selling luxury food and electrical equipment, as well as other stores. A more interesting experience can be had at the noisy and dusty **coppersmiths' market**, where you can watch men hammer away at tin pots and coffee jugs. This market is renowned across Turkey for the standard of craftsmanship.

NIGHTLIFE

Eastern and Southeast Anatolia are not the places to come if you want rowdy nightlife. Evening entertainment often consists of a good meal, although alcohol is not served in many places.

Gaziantep has several nightclubs, which are popular at weekends. **Undergrand**, The Grand Hotel, Ali Fuat Cebesoy Bulvari 32. This disco in the basement of the five-star hotel mainly attracts businessmen.

Dorian, Incilipinar Mahallesi, Gazi Muhtar Paşa Bulvari, ☎ 0342-2154513, is a stylish club and bar popular with locals.

Club 27, in the Tuğcan Hotel, is a small nightclub with live bands and a DJ playing Turkish and Western music.

WHERE TO STAY

Hotels in this region range from basic and even grubby budget hotels to palatial business hotels. The cold climate in the Eastern region means rooms are often overheated. Because there are not as many tourists here as in other parts of the country, you can ask for a bigger discount on the room rate.

HOTEL PRICES	
$	Under US $50
$$	US $50-$100
$$$	US $101-$175
$$$$	Over US $175

Costs given are based on one room, double occupancy. They do not include taxes, which run 18%.

DIYARBAKIR

Diyarbakir, Class Hotel, Gazi Caddesi 101, ☎ 0412-2295050, www.diyarbakirclasshotel.com, has outdoor and indoor pools, a Turkish bath and sauna and shopping center. The 120 rooms are of a good standard, although the décor is unexciting. $$$

© Class Hotel

© Dedeman Hotels & Resorts

Hotel Dedeman Diyarbakir, Elaziğ Caddesi, ☎ 0412-2290000, www.dedeman.com. The 98 rooms at the Dedeman are decorated in pastel shades, which is little dated for a classy hotel. Otherwise, the standard is high, particularly in the restaurants. There is a great outdoor pool, beauty center and fitness suite. $$$$

AUTHOR PICK: Hotel Büyük Kervansaray, Gazi Caddesi, Mardin Kapi, ☎ 0412-2289606. Located opposite the Mardin Gate, this unusual black and white stone caravansary has been converted into an opulent boutique hotel. It has three good restaurants and a beautiful courtyard garden. Amenities include a gym and Turkish bath. $$$

DOGUBEYAZIT

Hotel Grand Derya, Eminet Caddesi, ☎ 0472-3127531, is centrally located and has clean, but pretty basic rooms akin with a youth hostel. $

AUTHOR PICK: **Golden Hill Hotel**, Cevre Yolu Uzer, ☎ 0472-3128717, is the best bet for an overnight stop and is popular with trekkers making their way to Mount Ararat. The hotel, like the mountain, springs up in the middle of nowhere, although given the general grime in the main town, that is no bad thing. There are 90 rooms, two restaurants and a Turkish bath. $$

© Golden Hill Hotel

The 125-room **SIM-ER Hotel**, Iran Yolu, ☎ 0472-3124842, is set in a flower- and shrub-filled garden on the outskirts of town, on the road to Mount Ararat. The hotel is arranged in motel style and the rooms were undergoing refurbishment at the time of writing. $

GAZIANTEP

AUTHOR PICK: **Anadolu Evleri**, Sekeroglu Mahallesi, Koroğlu Sokak, ☎ 0342-2209525, www.anadoluevleri.com, is a divine eight-room hotel set around a black and white courtyard. The part-American owner, Timur, restored the building to its former glory. Bedrooms and bathrooms are spacious and chic. There is no restaurant, although it is possible to order food from a nearby restaurant and eat in the hotel's courtyard while drinking a glass of wine from its growing cellar. $$

© Anadolu Evleri

Tuğcan Hotel, Atatürk Bulvari 34, ☎ 0342-2204323, www.tugcanhotel.com.tr, is a five-star hotel with 141 rooms catering to businessmen and well-heeled tourists. Rooms have cable TV, Internet access and air conditioning. The atrium bar has live music most nights and there are several restaurants, an indoor pool and gym. $$$$

KARS

The 50-room **Hotel Karabağ**, Faikbey Caddesi 184, ☎ 0474-2123480, www.hotel-karabag.com, is in the center of Kars, one km from the train station. It is a comfortable budget hotel with a restaurant and small bar. The hotel has packages that include meals and a tour of Ani. $$

© Sarikamis Toprak Hotel

Şarikamiş Toprak Hotel, Cibiltepe Mevkii, Şarikamiş ski resort, ☎ 0474-4134111, www.toprakhotels.com. This five-star hotel at the foot of the ski slopes is absolutely top draw. A sweeping staircase in the lobby leads to 118 wood-paneled rooms with oversized furniture and plasma TVs. The hotel has several stylish restaurants and bars and a health club. $$$

The four-star **SIM-ER Hotel**, ☎ 0474-2127241, is excellent value. Its gray and cream exterior looks slightly Communist block, but the interior is pleasant. The 146 rooms have bathrooms with bathtubs and some have mountain views. There is a choice of restaurants and bars, as well as a sauna. $$

MARDIN & MIDYAT

Büyük Mardin Hotel, Yeniyol Caddesi, Mardin, ☎ 0482-2131047, has 150 rooms beautifully decorated with traditional kilims and throws. Some have views of Mardin's old town. Facilities, which include a fitness suite, Turkish bath and sauna, are of a good standard. There are also jewelry and carpet stores. $$$

AUTHOR PICK: **Erdoba Konakleri**, 1 Caddesi 135, Mardin, ☎ 0482-2127677, www.erdoba.com.tr, consists of two adjoining houses, one built in the 14th century and the other in the 18th century. It blends the absolute best of Mardin's architectural styles with stone embroidery around the windows and doors. A broad terrace features a café overlooking the old city. The deluxe rooms are enormous, with high vaulted ceilings and four-poster beds. $$$

Hotel Bilen, Karayollari Karsisi Vali Ozan Caddesi 72, Yenisehir, Mardin, ☎ 0482-2122575, is a functional 48-room hotel on the edge of the old city. It has a restaurant, Turkish bath and small fitness room. $

Otel Matiat, Mardin Yolu, Mardin, ☎ 0482-4625920, www.matiat.com.tr. A sandstone arch, topped with the flags of a dozen countries, marks the imposing entrance to this hotel. A long driveway runs beside the Olympic-size pool and leads up to the grand hotel building. Inside, the lobby and restaurant are light and contemporary and the rooms meet European standards. Fitness facilities are available. $$

SANLIURFA

AUTHOR PICK: **Hotel El-Ruha**, Balikligol, ☎ 0414-2154411, www.hotelelruha.com. One of the grandest hotels in the region, El-Ruha is hidden behind within a walled courtyard close to the bazaar and citadel. The rooms are elegant and there are three restaurants, including one set within a cave. $$$

AUTHOR PICK: **Gulizar Konuk Evi**, Karameydani Camii Yani 22, ☎ 0414-2150505. This former *Aga's*, or lord's house, is set around a courtyard with a fountain in the middle. Rooms have 150-year-old paneling and wooden doors. Mattresses are placed on the large Ottoman seating area so you can sleep the way traveling salesmen would have done on the Silk Road. It is utterly charming. The only downside is that there is a shared bathroom downstairs. $$

Hotel Harran, Atatürk Bulvari, ☎ 0414-3132860. The main feature of the hotel is its lovely pool and garden. The 99 rooms have air conditioning and satellite TV. Some are slightly dated. $$$

VAN

Büyük Urartu Oteli, Cumhuriyet Caddesi 60, ☎ 0432-2120660, is a grand four-star hotel on one of the main routes through the city. It has good management and is tastefully decorated throughout. Indoor pool and sauna. $$

Akdamar Oteli, Karabekir Caddesi, ☎ 0432-2149923. Van has many clean, basic hotels around its city center and Akdamar is no exception. All the rooms have a TV, heating and showers. It is not a pretty hotel, but it can serve for a night while you are passing through the city. $

Merit Sahmaran, Edremit Yolu 12, ☎ 0432-3122295, www.merithotels.com, set on Lake Van, is something of a concrete fortress with fake Corinthian columns at the entrance. The rooms are well appointed and there is a pleasant restaurant and lounge. $$$

WHERE TO EAT

DIYARBAKIR

Kuce Basi, Kibris Caddesi 11, Dağkapi Meydani, ☎ 0412-2295861. This second-floor restaurant stands out among the many good eateries in the city. The kebabs are fresh and spicy and the service is great. $$

Nur Ocakbasi, Inönü Caddesi 3, ☎ 0412-2238916. Located in an alleyway, this simple kebab shop comes highly recommended. There are a few tables to eat in and a take-out service. $

DINING PRICES

Prices based on a three-course meal, including non-alcoholic drinks.

$	Under US $5-15
$$	US $15-$25
$$$	US $25-$35
$$$$	Over US $35

DOGUBEYAZIT

Doğus, Belediye Saray Caddesi, ☎ 0472-3127348. The dull town of Doğubeyazit seems a lot better after you have loaded up on Turkish *meze*, kebabs and *lahmacun* (Turkish pizza) at this simple restaurant. $

GAZIANTEP

Abusoğlu, Atatürk Bulvari 91, ☎ 0342-2317505. A café that serves out-of-this-world chocolates and pastries. $

Imam Çagdas, Kale Civan, Uzun Çarşi 14, ☎ 0342-2204545. There are two good reasons to eat here: the kebabs and the baklava. Both are billed as the best in the city the busy tables prove the hype. $

Mado, Atatürk Bulvari, ☎ 0342-2211500. An outlet of the chain of ice cream and pizza cafés. $$

Oteki Café, Alabey Mahallesi, Gaziler Caddesi, ☎ 0342-2308615. This café is set over several floors of a rambling old house in a lane off the city's main shopping street. It serves Turkish snacks, pizza and coffee. $

Papirus Café, Atatürk Bulvari, Bey Mahallesi, Noter Sokak 10, ☎ 0342-2203279, is a cool bar and restaurant in an old Armenian house once owned by a financier. It has been partially restored by a group of friends, and its walls are decorated with frescoes and carvings. Ask the bar staff to show you around. $$

KARS

Fasil Ocakbasi Restaurant, Faikbey Caddesi 100, Yil Ishani Kat 1, ☎ 0474-2121714. This smart, first-floor restaurant on the main drag through Kars serves good fish and kebab dishes all day. During the day is it a businessmen's hangout, but when Turkish bands are playing at night, the atmosphere is lively and fun. $$

Bistro Bar, Resul Yildiz Caddesi, ☎ 0474-2128050. This steak and kebab restaurant is set on the banks of the river with views across the city's park. $$

MARDIN & MIDYAT

Tarihi Midyat Gelüşke Hani, Eski Midyat Çarşisi, Midyat, ☎ 0482-4641442. This ruined old caravansary has been partially restored and its courtyard now serves as a restaurant and art gallery. The owner, Veli, is as crazy as his name suggests. But he knows good food and service, and is genuinely great company. You may find yourself lingering a little too long over lunch. $$

Turistik Lokantasi, Cumhuriyet Meydani 449, Mardin, ☎ 0482-2121647, dishes up huge portions of hot and cold appetizers, fresh meat and vegetables. You can slump on the Ottoman divans afterwards to let it digest. $$

SANLIURFA

Çardakli Koşk, Balikligol Civari Tünel Cikisi 1 (close to Hotel El-Ruha), ☎ 0414-2171080. This Urfa house has a fantastic restaurant on its upper terrace with views of the citadel and surrounding streets. The kebabs are almost secondary to the setting. $$$

Urfa Sofrasi, Karakoyun Ismerkezi Kat 1, 226, ☎ 0414-3156130. This classy first-floor restaurant is a little difficult to find, but worth the effort for the home-cooked Urfa dishes and seriously good kebabs. $$

Appendix

RECOMMENDED READING

TURKISH HISTORY

Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey, Ekrem Akurgal. Publisher: Paul Kegan 2002.

Ancient Turkey: A Traveller's History, Seton Lloyd. Publisher: University of California Press 1992.

Atatrük: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey, Andrew Mango. Publisher: Overlook Press 2002. An insightful account of the life of the Father of the Turks.

Atatrük: The Rebirth of a Nation, Patrick Kinross. Publisher: Weidenfeld & Nicholson 2001. The most compelling tale of Atatürk's life with vivid details that make it read like a novel.

Atatürk's Children: Turkey and the Kurds, Jonathan Rugman and Roger Hutchings. Publisher: Continuum International Publishing Group 2001.

Constantinople: The Last Great Siege, 1453, Roger Crowley. Publisher: Faber and Faber 2005. An absorbing account of the fall of the old city.

Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds, Stephen Kinzer. Publisher: Farrar Straus Giroux 2002. The author explores Turkey's uncomfortable history.

The Emergence of Modern Turkey, Bernard Lewis. Publisher: Oxford University Press Inc. 2001. A classic guide to the history of Turkey from an Islamic Empire to a pro-Western nation.

Essential Histories: The Crusaders, David Nicolle. Publisher: Osprey Publishing Limited 2001.

The Future of the Past, Alexander Stille. Publisher: Picador 2003. An exploration of the world's crumbling treasures, including some of Turkey's.

The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923, Justin McCarthy. Publisher: Addison Wesley Longman Limited 1997. A comprehensive guide to everything that happened during the centuries of Ottoman rule. Full of anecdotes.

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, edited by Peter A. Clayton and Martin J. Price. Publisher: Routledge 1988. Describes the history, location and purpose of the ancient wonders, including the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, John and Elizabeth Romer. Publisher: Seven Dials, Cassell & Co. 2000. Another insightful book exploring the great wonders.

The Silk Road: Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia, Frances Wood. Publisher: University of California Press 2003. An exploration, spanning thousands of years, of one of the world's greatest trading byways. The author is the head of the Chinese section at the British Library.

Twice the Stranger: Greece, Turkey and the Minorities they Expelled, Bruce Clark. Publisher: Granta Books 2006. The transformation of Turkey into a Republic led to the Exchange of Populations in 1923, when two million Turks and Greeks were resettled in their native countries. This book uses interviews with refugees to tell the story.

ART & ARCHITECTURE

Sinan: Ottoman Architecture and its Values Today, Godfrey Goodwin. Publisher: Saqi Books 2001. Sinan was Turkey's greatest architect. This book explores his influences and the lasting beauty of his creations with great photography.

Splendours of the Bosphorus: Houses and Palaces of Istanbul, Chris Hellier and Francesco Venturi. Publisher: Tauris Parke 1993. A beautiful, if expensive, coffee table book with mesmerizing photography.

The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire, Gulru Necipoğlu, Arben N. Arapi, Reha Gunay. Publisher: Princeton University Press 2005. The definitive study of Sinan. With beautiful illustrations, it explores new views of his influences and style.

Turkish Delights, Philippa Scott. Publisher: Thames and Hudson Ltd. 2001. An informative look at the lavish furnishings and paintings of Turkey spanning centuries.

CULTURE

Culture Smart! Turkey, Charlotte McPherson. Publisher: Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company 2005. An up-to-date guide to Turkish customs and etiquette for travelers.

Portrait of a Turkish Family, Ifran Orga. Publisher: Eland 2002. A haunting portrait of a family during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and beginning of the Republic.

Tales from the Expat Harem, Anastasia M. Ashman and Jennifer Eaton Gokmen. Publisher: Seal Press 2006. An insight into the ingenuity of women.

Turkish Culture for Americans, Hasan Dindi et al. Publisher: International Concepts Ltd. 1989. This culture guide gives a useful insight into Turkish life and tips on how to interact with Turkish people.

TRAVEL

Blue Guide Turkey, Bernard McDonagh. Pubisher: Blue Guides Ltd. 2001. A classic travel guide.

A Fez of the Heart: Travels Through Turkey in Search of a Hat, Jeremy Seal. Publisher: Picador 1996. A hilarious journey exploring Turkey's cultural and religious mix.

Istanbul: Memories of a City, Orhan Pamuk. Publisher: Faber and Faber 2006. A beautiful account of the faded elegance of Istanbul by Turkey's most famous writer.

Stories From The Silk Road, Cherry Gilchrist, Nilesh Mistry. Publisher: Barefoot Books 2005. The history and culture of the Silk Road are brought to life in a series of humorous and quirky stories for children.

The Art of the Turkish Tale, Barbara K. Walker. Publisher: Texas Tech University Press 1993.

The Lycian Way, Kate Clow and Terry Richardson. Publisher: Up Country (Turkey) Ltd. 2005. The ultimate guide to the first waymarked hiking path in Turkey by the woman who designed it.

NOVELS

Birds Without Wings, Louis De Bernieres. Publisher: Knopf 2004. The writer of *Captain Correlli's Mandolin* turns his hand to writing a love story set in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. The tale follows the impact of the First World War on a set of characters who are of Turkish, Greek and Armenian descent.

Memed my Hawk, Yashar Kemal. Publisher: The Harvill Press 1997. This is a passionate novel about an orphan's pursuit of justice in the remote Anatolian mountains.

Murder on the Orient Express, Agatha Christie. Publisher: Berkley Publishing Group 2004 (latest edition). Christie's detective romp places the ever-enduring Poirot amid a bizarre cast of characters on the luxury train. Great for the beach.

My Name is Red, Orhan Pamuk. Publisher: Knopf 2001. Set in 16th-century Istanbul, a master illustrator is commissioned to work on a book celebrating the life of the sultan. When he is later found dead in a well, a series of colorful, if slightly odd, characters narrate the tale of the investigation into his murder.

Snow, Orhan Pamuk. Publisher: Knopf 2004. A dark story about the political and social tensions in Eastern Turkey.

Stamboul Train, Graham Greene. Publisher: Vintage 2001 (latest edition). A gripping spy thriller set on the infamous *Orient Express* by my favorite writer.

COOKERY

Arabesque: A Taste of Morocco, Turkey and Lebanon, Claudia Roden. Publisher: Michael Joseph Ltd. 2005.

Classic Turkish Cooking, Ghillie Basan and Jonathan Basan. Publisher: Tauris Parke 1995.

RECOMMENDED TOUR COMPANIES

TURKISH TOUR OPERATORS

ANKARA

All Seasons Tours & Travel, Bestekar Sokak 80/7, Kavaklidere, ☎ 0312-4284150, www.allseasonstour.com.tr. All Seasons is a full-service travel agency run by Özlem Urgancioglu, who owns the beautiful Paşa Konaği hotel in Safranbolu. The team is friendly and diligent. Services include flight tickets, car hire and hotel reservations.

ISTANBUL

Adventure Tours, Seftali Sokak 12/C, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5208720, www.adventuretours.com.tr. The agency has a full range of cultural and religious tours across Turkey, including Jewish Highlights, In Trace of Christianity and Islamic Heritage tours. They also offer adventure trips, such as jeep safaris and cycling.

Anatolian Adventures, ☎ 0216-4185222, www.anatolianadventures.com. One of the best travel companies in Turkey, Anatolian Adventures has a broad spectrum of guided cultural and religious tours, alongside its trekking and climbing expeditions.

Barefoot Travel, ☎ 0212-5170269, www.barefoot-travel.com. A range of sightseeing and cultural tours across the country, including off-the-beaten-track excursions in the East. They also run diving, jeep safari, mountain biking and trekking tours.

Credo Tours, Taksim Caddesi, Yonca Apt. 69/6, Taksim, ☎ 0212-2548175, www.credotours.com. Credo specializes in historical and cultural trips in Istanbul, Cappadocia, the Aegean Coast and Eastern Turkey. The numbers are restricted on the group tours, giving a tailor-made experience.

Orion Tour, Halaskargazi Caddesi, Marmara Apt. 284, ☎ 0212-2326300, www.oriontour.com. A range of budget tours around Istanbul, the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts and Cappadocia. Plus, religious tours cater to Muslims and Christians.

Tur-ISTA, Divanyolu Caddesi 16A, Sultanahmet, ☎ 0212-5277085, www.tur-ista.com. Tur-ISTA services include train tickets, bus and flight tickets, hotel reservations and car hire. The company also arranges escorted tours to Cappadocia, Pamukkale and Ephesus. Independent travelers can hire a car with an English-speaking driver at rock-bottom rates.

AEGEAN COAST

Ampuria Tour, Donanmaci Mahallesi, 1722 Sokak 2/7, Foça, ☎ 0232-3646077, www.ampuriatour.com. Isil, the owner of Ampuria, has around two decades of hotel and travel industry experience. The agency runs a number of tours to Ephesus, Pamukkale, Sardis and other major historical sites along the coast and in other regions. Car hire, hotel and flight reservations can be made.

BODEX Travel & Tours, Atatürk Caddesi 76/1, Bodrum, ☎ 0252-3132843, is a full-service travel agency that can arrange hotel stays, car hire and flight tickets. It also offers trekking and biblical tours.

Down Under Tours (TJ's Travel), Otel Saros, Eceabat, Çanakkale, ☎ 0286-8142431, www.anzactours.com. Run by a Turkish-Australian couple, Down Under Travel is a specialist on the Gallipoli region. The Turkish half of the partnership, TJ, is the most experienced guide in the area. This is the only agency with access to the war grave records to help you find relatives. Down Under also offers diving trips and can arrange pension and hotel reservations.

Ekol Travel, Kibris Caddesi, Buyral Sokak 9/1, Kuşadasi, ☎ 0256-6145591, www.ekoltravel.com. Ekol has a variety of sightseeing and religious tours in the Aegean region. Activity tours include rafting, hunting, paragliding and diving.

MEDITERRANEAN COAST

Amber Travel, Atatürk Bulvari 23, Kaş, ☎ 0242-8361630, www.ambertravel.com. Amber is run by a British couple who specialize in activity, family and cultural tours. These include art and photography, flora and faith tours.

Equinox Travel, Gençlik Mahallesi, Fevzi Cakmak Caddesi, 1315 Sokak 1/10, ☎ 0242-2478836, equinox.com.tr, has classic sightseeing tours along Turkey's western coast and Eastern Anatolia. Its special interest tours include photography, architecture and culinary.

Tum-Tour Yacht Charter, Yat Limani 101/B, Marmaris, ☎ 0252-4129485, organizes Blue Cruise boat excursions around the Mediterranean.

CAPPADOCIA

Argeus Travel, Istiklal Caddesi 7, Ürgüp, ☎ 0384-3414688, www.argeus.com.tr, based in the heart of Cappadocia, runs highly professional group and bespoke tours of this and other regions in Turkey for high-end clients. Independent travellers can book car and driver packages and arrange airport transfers. The agency also has cycling, hiking and horseback riding combination tours in Cappadocia.

Cappadocia Tours, Istiklal Caddesi 19/9, Ürgüp, ☎ 0384-3417485, www.cappadociatours.com. Süleyman Cakir was one of the original team at Argeus before setting up his own agency. He has a range of private and group escorted tours, including Cappadocia, Istanbul and the Seven Churches. There are also horseback riding and cycling trips.

BLACK SEA COAST

Sinope Tours, Kibris Caddesi 3, Sinop, ☎ 0368-2617900, www.sinopetours.com. Sinope has a range of nature and cultural tours in the Black Sea region. Hotel reservations, flights and car hire can be arranged. The agency is a good source of information on the local area.

US & CANADIAN TOUR OPERATORS

Asia Minor Travel & Tours, 6919 West Broward Boulevard, Plantation, FL, ☎ 954-792-5511, www.asiaminortours.com. Special interest and archaeological tours guided by academics.

Caravan Serai Tours, 3806 Whitman Avenue North, Seattle, WA, ☎ 206-545-7300, www.caravan-serai.com. This award-winning agency specializes in excursions to the Middle East. They cater to a classy clientele and include wine and gourmet tours.

Heritage Tours, 121 West 27th Street, Suite 1201, New York, NY, ☎ 800-378-4555, www.htprivatetravel.com, caters to the high-end of the travel market with its custom-designed, private tours across Turkey.

Peregrine Adventures, ☎ 800-227-8747, www.peregrineadventures.com, offers four trips in Turkey, including two tours that combine the highlights of Cappadocia, Istanbul and the western coast. Peregrine also has a sailing trip and a trekking tour on the Lycian Way.

Treasure of Travel, ☎ 800-572-0526, www.treasuresoftravel.com, has several interesting cultural tours in the Eastern, Central and Black Sea regions, including one that explores cuisine and textile heritage. The numbers are restricted and the attention to detail is high.

Trek Holidays, 8412-109 Street, Edmonton, Canada, ☎ 800-661-7265, www.trekholidays.com, acts as a booking agent for a wide range of escorted tours operated by other companies. It has a team with local knowledge who can offer advice. The tours include adventure and cultural tours, and countless sightseeing excursions for budget travellers. Last-minute discounts are available.

UK TOUR OPERATORS

Metak Holidays, ☎ 0208-2909292, www.metakholidays.co.uk, is a long-established Turkey specialist with mid-priced hotels in the major resorts and Istanbul.

Savile Tours, ☎ 0207-9233230, www.saviletours.com, has a range of unusual and exclusive hotels in Istanbul, Cappadocia and on the western coast.

Exclusive Escapes, 0208-8914465, www.exclusiveescapes.com, specializes in upmarket holidays and boutique hotels, mainly in the Mediterranean.

ADVENTURE TOUR OPERATORS

Adrift, UK ☎ 0148-871152, www.adrift.co.uk. Whitewater rafting specialist offering trips down the Çoruh River in the Kaçkar Mountains.

Bougainville Travel, Turkey ☎ 0242-8363737, www.bougainville-turkey.com. Kaş-based Bougainville is adventure central, with paragliding, sea kayaking, hiking, canyoning, diving and mountain biking among its exhaustive list. The seven-day tour packages them all or they can be booked separately.

Country Walkers, PO Box 180, Waterbury, VT, US ☎ 800-464-9255, www.countrywalkers.com. The specialist trekking company has a tour of Cappadocia and the southern coast of Turkey.

Exodus, UK ☎ 0870-2405550, www.exodus.co.uk, is an adventure and cultural trip specialist. Tours include trekking along the Lycian Way, climbing Mount Ararat, cycling from Istanbul to Cappadocia and sea kayaking.

The Imaginative Traveller, www.imaginative-traveller.com. A good choice of activities and sightseeing itineraries for all budgets. The Wild Turkey Adventure combines canoeing, rafting and trekking with sightseeing.

Kaunos Tours, PTT Karsisi, Dalyan, Turkey ☎ 0252-2842816, www.kaunostours.com, has daily jeep safari, whitewater rafting, mountain biking, diving and canyoning trips. There is also a one-week multi-activity package. Tours are inexpensive and well organized.

KE Adventure Travel, UK ☎ 01768-773966, www.keadventure.com, runs serious trekking and cycling expeditions across Turkey, including an ascent of Mount Ararat, trekking along the Lycian Way and mountain biking in Cappadocia.

Middle Earth Travel, Civizler Sokak 20, Göreme, Turkey ☎ 0384-2712559, www.middleearthtravel.com. The agency is dedicated to trekking and climbing tours in Turkey. Programs include Mount Ararat, the Lycian and St. Paul trails and the Kaçkar Mountains.

Nomadic Excursions, PO Box 1838 San Anselmo, CA, US ☎ 415-992-7420, www.nomadicexcursions.com, puts emphasizes on the adventure of travel. Many of its tours feature hiking and cultural activities. The Adrenaline Rush tour squeezes in sea kayaking, canyoning, rafting and abseiling.

Sherpa Expeditions, UK ☎ 0208 577 2717, www.sherpa-walking-holidays.co.uk. Sherpa's range of tours include climbing Mount Ararat and trekking along the Lycian Way.

Wilderness Adventure, US ☎ 800-368-2794, www.wildernesstravel.com, has guided tours that combine sailing and hiking with major archaeological ruins.

RECOMMENDED GUIDES

The Turkish Tourist Office can provide a full list of tour guides. Here are two guides who are both highly professional and fun:

Bülent Orkus (cell phone ☎ 0532-3112424, borkus@superonline.com) is an Ankara native who now lives in Istanbul. He has in-depth knowledge of Turkey, its culture and history.

Ceylan Dedeoğlu (cell phone ☎ 0532-7800077, ceylandedeoglu@hotmail.com) lives in Izmir and is an expert on Ephesus and other archaeological sites in western Turkey.

INFORMATION SOURCES

MAGAZINES

Emerging Turkey **2005**. Publisher: The Oxford Business Group.

LANGUAGE

Atatürk introduced sweeping reforms in 1928 to boost literacy in the country. The reforms transformed the national language from Arabic script to the Roman alphabet. Persian and Arabic vocabulary was replaced by words of Turkic origin. The language is almost phonetic and most Turks are unused to spelling out words. The Turkish alphabet has eight vowels and 21 consonants.

There are a few pronunciation rules that need to be learned:

a is pronounced *aah*, as in card or dark

c is pronounced *j*, as in judge

ç is similar to *ch*, as in church (çay, meaning "tea," is pronounced chay, rhyming with buy)

e is pronounced *eh*, as in bed

ğ is pronounced as in get; however, an accented g is usually silent. It can lengthen the preceding vowel or be pronounced like y if it appears in the middle of a word.

i is pronounced *ih*, i as in sit; an undotted i is pronounced *u*, as in radium, or *i*, as in cousin

j - j as in John

o is pronounced *ow*, as in fold

ö takes on the sound like the French *eu*, as in peur (göl, which rhymes with furl, means "lake")

ş makes a *sh* sound, as in ship

u is pronounced *oo*, as in boot (buz, pronounced like booze, means "ice")

ü is pronounced *ooh*, like zoo

NUMBERS

One	bir
Two	iki
Three	üç
Four	dört
Five	beş
Six	alti
Seven	yedi
Eight	sekiz
Nine	dokuz
Ten	on
Eleven	onbir
Twelve	oniki
Twenty	yirmi
Twenty-one	yirmi bir
Twenty-two	yirmi iki
Thirty	otuz
Forty	kirk
Fifty	elli

Sixty	altmiş
Seventy	yetmiş
Eighty	seksen
Ninety	doksan
One hundred	yüz
One thousand	bin

DAYS OF THE WEEK

Monday	Pazartesi
Tuesday	Sal
Wednesday	Çaşamba
Thursda	Perşembe
Friday	Cuma
Saturday	Cumartesi
Sunday	Pazar

MONTHS

January	Ocak
February	Şubat
March	Mart
April	Nisan
May	Mayis
June	Haziran
July	Temmuz
August	Ağustos
September	Eylul
October	Ekim
November	Kasim
December	Aralik

GREETINGS

Hello	Merhaba
Good morning	Günaydin
Goodbye	Iyi gunler
Goodnight	Iyi geceler
Good evening	Iyi akşamlar
Goodbye (said *by* person leavng)	Allahaismarladik
Go in Safety (said *to* the person leaving)	Güle güle
Welcome *(Appropriate response is Hos bulduk)*	Hoşgeldiniz
How are you?	Nasilsiniz?
I am well, thanks	Iyiyim Sağol
What is your name?	Adiniz ne?

My name is...	Adim...
I am pleased to meet you	Memnun oldum
How are you?	Nasilsiniz?
After you/Come in/Be seated/Help yourself (a universal phrase)	Buyurun

ESSENTIALS

Yes.	Evet
No	Hayir/yok
Okay	Tamam
Please	Lütfen
Thank you.	Teşekkür ederim/mersi
Excuse me	Affedersiniz/pardon
If God Wills **EXPLAIN WHEN USED	Inşallah
What did you say	Affedersiniz?
What/How?	Ne/Nasil?
Bon appétit	Afiyet olsun
Health to your hands (said to a cook)	Elinize sağlik
I do not speak Turkish	Turkçe bilimyorum
I do not understand	Anlamiyorum
Where is it?/Where is the...	... nerede?
... toilet	... tuvalet nerede?
What time is it?	Saatiniz varmi?
At what time.	Saat katça?
today	bugün
tomorrow	yarin
yesterday	dün
the day after tomorrow	obur gün
now	şimdi
Later	sonra
When?	ne zaman?
morning/in the morning.	sabah
afternoon/in the afternoon	ogleden sonar
evening/in the evening	akşam
this evening	bu akşam
here	burada
there	şurada
over there	orada
Do you have/is there a... ?	... varmi?
... taxi?	... taksi varmi?
... bread?	... ekmek varmi?
There is/I have....	Var...
There is not/I do not have...	Yok...
There is no time	Zaman yok
Very beautiful/very good	Çok güzel

(used to describe people, places and food)

old/new	eski/yeni
Enough	Yeter
Watch Out!/Be careful!	Dikkat!
Leave me alone	Beni rahat birakin

EATING OUT

Can we have a table for two/four, please?	Iki/dört kişilik bir masa, lütfen?
menu	menü
Can I have the bill, please?	Hesap, lütfen?
Service included/excluded	Servis dahil/haric
Can we have some more water/bread, please?	Biraz daha su/ekmek, lütfen?
cup	fincan
glass	bardak
plate	tabak
knife	biçak
fork	çatal
spoon	kaşik
napkin	peçete
big/large	büyük
small/little	küçük

FOOD & DRINK

water	su
mineral water	maden suyu
carbonated water	soda
orange juice	portakal suyu
milk	süt
coffee	kahve
tea	çay
apple tea	elma çay
ice	buz
beer	bira
wine	şarap
wine list	şarap listesi
red	kirmizi
white	beyaz
bottle	şişe
half-bottle	yarim şişe
vodka	votka
gin and tonic	cintonik
local/Turkish	yerli

salt	tuz
pepper	biber
sugar, candy, sweet	seker
no sugar	sade
bread	ekmek
butter	tereyağ
eggs	yumurta
cheese	peynir
omelet	omlet
appetizers	meze
meat	et
grills	izgara
kebab	kebap
lamb	kuzu
lamb cutlets	pizola
beef	siğir
turkey	hindi
meatballs	köfte
caserole	guveç
chicken	tavuk
fish	balik
shrimp	karides
grilled fish	balik izgara
fried fish	balik kizartmasi
anchovies	hamsi
rice pilaf	pilav
salad lettuce	salata
tomatoes	domates
olives	zeytin
cucumber	salatalik
potatoes	patates
French fries	patates kizartmasi
fruit	meyva
vegetable	sebze
vegetarian dishes	etsiz yemekler
soup	çorba
sandwich	sandviç
toasted sandwich	tost
dessert	tatli
ice cream, sorbet	dondurma
yogurt drink	ayran

FAMILY

man, male	erkek
woman, female	kadin

child	çocuk
girl	kiz
boy	oglan
daughter	kiz
son	ogul
mother	anne
baba	baba
sister	kiz kardes
brother	erkek kardes
friend	arkadas
he, she, it, that	o

SHOPPING

market	pazar
price	fiyat
Ho much is that?	Bu ne kadar/Kaç para?
This is expensive	Bu pahali
This is cheap	Bu çok ucuz
How many?	Kaç tane?
Do you take credit cards?	Kredi karti alir misiniz?
I want...	Istiyorum...
I don't want...	Istemiyorum...
...a larger/smaller size	... daha büyük/küçük
trousers/pants	pantolon
jacket	ceket
dress	elbise
skirt	etek
blouse	bluz
coat	palto
gloves	eldiven
hat	şapka
tie	kravat
umbrella	şemsiye
shirt	gömlek
purse/handbag	çanta
shorts	şort
shoes	ayakkabi
sweater	kazak
belt	kemer
watch	kol saati
hairdryer	fön
suitcase	valiz
razor	traş makinasi

TRAVELING BY CAR

car	araba
driving license	ehliyet
ga station	benzin istasyonu
Fill it up, please.	Doldurun, lütfen
unleaded gas/diesel	kurşunsuz/motorin
flat tire/puncture	patlak lastik
slowly	yavaş
Climbing Lane (on hills)	Tirmanma seridi
Stop	Dür
One way	Tek yön
Give way	Yol ver
No entry	Girilmez
Detour (temporary road)	Servis Yolu
Entrance	Giriş
Exit	Çikiş
long vehicle	uzun araç
No parking.	Park yapilmaz/edilmez
Pedestrian crossing	Yaya gecidi
Road work	Yol calismasi
Rest area	Dinlenme Alani
Service area	Servis Aiani
Vehicles exiting	Araç cikabilir
Transit European Motorway	Tem Oto Yolu

TRAVELING BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

bus station	otogar
bus.	otobus
bus stop	emanet
train station.	gar
train	tren
taxi	taksi
airport	havalimani/havaalani
port/harbor	liman
boat	gemi
ferry	feribot
key/quay	iskele
ticket.	bilet
ticket office	gişe
I want a map	Bir harita istiyorum
Can I reserve a seat?	Reservasyon yapabilir miyim?
How long does it take?	Ne kadar suruyor?
Which bus?	Hangi otobus?
What time does it leave?	Kaçta kalkiyor?

PLACES

city center	şehir merkezi/centrum
village	köy
forest	orman
sea	deniz
lake	göl
farm	çiftlik
church	kilise
castle	kale
mosque	camii
post office	postane
hospital	hastane
house	ev
What time does it open/close?	Katça açilicak/kapanacak?

ACCOMMODATION

hotel	otel
guesthouse	pansiyon
I have a reservation	Reservasyonim var
Do you have room?	Odniz varmi?
I would like a room for one/two nights	Bir/iki gece için bir oda istiyorum?
single/double	tek/iki kişilik
full board	tam pansiyon
half-board	yarim pansiyon
room	oda
shower	duş
bathroom	banyo
hot water	sicak su
cold water	soğuk su
sea view	deniz manzarali
elevator	asansor
room service	oda servisi
air conditioned	hava klimali
key	anahtar
bed	yatak
towels	havlu
toilet paper	tuvalet kagidi
soap/shampoo	sabun/şhampuan
chair	koltuk
dining room	yemek salonu

COMMON SIGNS

Restroom	Tuvalet
Men	Bay
Women	Bayan
Drinking water	Içme su
Out of Service	Bozuk
No smoking	Sigara içilmez
Open	Açik
Closed	Kapali
Arrivals	Varis
Departures	Kalkis

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